

EAGLE BLOOD



JAMES CREELMAN

62/1 J. M. Ed
Autopne

Autographed 125

Faithfully yours,

James Crookman

Peter P. Galatin

EAGLE BLOOD





"THE SWORD OF BUNKER HILL." (See page 138.)

EAGLE BLOOD

BY

JAMES CREELMAN

Author of

"On the Great Highway"

ILLUSTRATED

BY ROSE CECIL O'NEILL

BOSTON

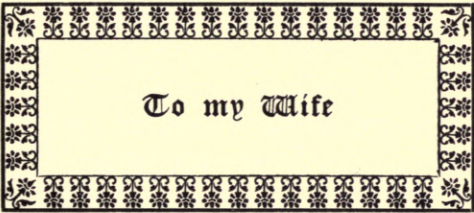
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To my Wife

2128892

*"LITTLE were the change of station, loss of
life or crown,
But the wreck were past retrieving if the
Man fell down."*

*SO his iron mace he lifted, smote with
might and main,
And the idol, on the pavement tumbling,
burst in twain.*

—LOWELL

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CHICAGO, ILL.
1900

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Illustrations

"The Sword of Bunker Hill" . . .	Frontispiece
	Page
"Marry a rich American"	16
"'Ah! good evening, my lady'"	175
"Leaped from his saddle, and lifting the fallen stars and stripes . . ."	270
"'Would you be sorry if I should return to England, Helen?'"	319
"'London Bridge is burning down'"	444

Eagle Blood

CHAPTER I

A BATTALION of stalwart grenadiers swung through Fleet Street in the rain, with squealing fifes and roaring drums, the dripping red ensign flapping in the wind above the moving mass of scarlet and steel and sodden bearskins. A thousand faces looked down from a thousand grimy windows and a hoarse murmur of cheering came from under the lines of streaming black umbrellas, crawling and bumping, turtle-like, along the splashed pavements; for if anything can move the voice of that most British street in the British Empire, it is the sight of the gloriously sharp steel that guards the sacred cause of British commerce throughout the dividend-paying world. Even the fat little hairdresser who shears British manes in Cardinal Wolsey's dishonored palace —

and can see from his back windows the Temple Church, where the dead crusaders lie forgotten — waved a brave napkin as the mud-spattered soldiers halted at Temple Bar, faced outward and moved backward to allow the brawling tide of omnibuses and cabs to sweep into their wonted channel, while a jaunty officer swore eloquently at the jeering cabbies as he rode through the jostling vehicles in search of his Exalted Highness, the Rajah of Jinghool, moving in state with the Heir Apparent toward the shrieking central market-place of Christendom.

The thousand faces receded from the windows, and Fleet Street forgot for the moment the red ensign and the shining bayonets.

“To put the matter quite plainly, my lord, there is not a shilling left, — not a shilling,” said Mr. Chadder, dryly, as the fifes ended with a plaintive skirl. “The sale of the South London Boot and Shoe Works to the Americans at a time like this was, to say the least, unfortunate. I did all I could to delay the foreclosure proceedings, knowing that you would be ruined, but the

court refused to grant any more time. I need not say to your father's son that I am sorry matters have ended so."

The burly solicitor pushed the iron-bound spectacles up on his forehead and glanced under his shaggy white brows at the pale young man who stood looking through a sooty window at the falling rain and the scarlet ranks of grenadiers in Fleet Street. Something in the slim figure, straight, narrow shoulders, and thin, boyish face touched the old man's heart, and his countenance softened.

There was silence for a moment. The young Viscount Delaunay drummed idly on the window-pane with his fingers and watched a bewigged barrister floundering in his drenched gown across the roaring thoroughfare below. Then he turned away and sat down beside the solicitor's desk. His slender face was bloodless, and there were dark rings under the haggard blue eyes.

"It's hard, I know," said Mr. Chadder, as he twirled an inky quill pen between his sinewy thumb and forefinger, "but, after all —"

"Yes," cried the young man, in a sudden

rage, "after all, I'm the first man of my blood in more than eight hundred years without money enough to buy a drink."

"As for drink, my lord," said the solicitor, slowly, his face hardening, "I think that the less we say about that, the better. You will remember, sir — if I may speak without offence — that your distinguished father —"

"Be kind enough to leave my father's name out of the conversation," said the viscount, as he threw his head back and his cheeks reddened. "You forget yourself, Chadder."

"As you will, sir," answered Mr. Chadder, with a sudden deference. "God forbid that I should say anything to wound your feelings."

"Oh, come, Chadder, I'm too quick," exclaimed the youth, impulsively. "I'm face to face with beggary. I don't know what I'm saying. I don't know where to turn" — the slender throat gulped and the proud, weak mouth trembled. "I can't help it. A man like you can never understand. Good God, Chadder! what am I to do for a living?"

Mr. Chadder settled his massive shoulders

back in his leather chair and set the spectacles down firmly on his enormous nose. He thrust out his thick under-lip and brought the tips of his fingers together with an impressive professional cough.

"I've been thinking of that, sir," he said gravely. "Yes, I've been thinking of it for a long time. I've seen the end coming. But perhaps your lordship might be offended if I ventured to speak plainly." The solicitor's keen eyes regarded the white face anxiously. "Your pride —"

"Oh, cut all that, Chadder. What am I to do to pay my creditors and live?"

"Sell the title."

"Sell — why you're jesting! An Englishman can't sell his rank."

"It's done every year, my lord," observed Mr. Chadder, with a wintry smile.

"Done every year? Impossible! Why, what do you mean?"

Mr. Chadder stood up, folded his arms across his mighty chest, and looked the viscount straight in the eyes. The silence was painful. The veins

stood out on his great, wrinkled forehead, and the muscles of his mouth quivered.

“Well, Chadder, out with it!”

“Marry a rich American. It’s the only way out.”

“What?” gasped the youth, leaping to his feet, “the heir to an earldom, with the blood of Godfrey de Bouillon in his veins, sell himself to a pork-packer’s daughter for cash?” The blue eyes flashed angrily, and the slight figure seemed to grow taller. “Chadder, I took you for an honest Englishman, but you’re a —” the shrill voice shook with passion — “you’re a damned cad!”

The old man shrank back as if from a blow, and his arms dropped helplessly by his side. For an instant the viscount stood trembling with anger, his lips parted, teeth clenched, and bright blotches of red glowing in his infuriate face. Then he sank meekly to his seat.

“Forgive me,” he faltered. “I didn’t mean it — no, really, Chadder, — I’m a bally, ungrateful ass —”

Mr. Chadder placed his hand on the young



"MARRY A RICH AMERICAN."

man's head and leaned over him with a look of deep affection.

"Lord Delaunay," he said in a slow, deliberate way, "I would take that insult from no other man. You are twenty-four years old, and, at your age, a man has ideals and prejudices that seem foolish to one who has had to deal with the hard facts of life, the empty pride of rank, the stern necessities of changing conditions. I may take a sordid view of matters, but we are living in a sordid age. What I have said to you I said as your dead father's friend and as your friend and counsellor, for I am truly your friend."

"You are, Chadder, you are" — and the blue eyes brimmed with tears; "I'm an infernal —"

"No," said the solicitor, quietly, "you are the last of a house founded by force, and you inherit the idea that the world owes you a living because the great knight whose crest you wear helped the Conqueror to crush the Saxon nobles and fought with his kinsman in the conquest of Jerusalem. The days of feudal chivalry are gone. Godfrey de Bouillon refused to wear a king's crown in Jerusalem because the Saviour wore a crown of

thorns there; the first Earl of Castlehurst, the founder of your line, struck Louis the Fat in the face for offering him a dukedom as the price of disloyalty to the Conqueror, and was rewarded for his fidelity with an English earldom; but go out into the streets of London to-day and see what it is that moves the world. A title without money invites pity or ridicule."

Mr. Chadder resumed his chair and his professional manner. He seemed to feel himself master of the situation.

"Now what have I proposed to you, sir?" he continued, as he softly rubbed his palms together and cocked one leg over the other. "Simply that you shall recognize things as they are and not as you think they ought to be. England has seen her best days. The competition of America is driving our manufacturers and merchants to the wall. We are becoming poorer every year, while the Americans are becoming richer. The forced sale of the South London Boot and Shoe Works, which has destroyed your lordship's last source of income, is simply an incident of the American invasion. England offers no opportunities to a

penniless nobleman. His very rank shuts him out of employments in which others may engage. The traditions of his family doom him to silent poverty."

"And the alternative is that he must sell himself to an American squaw," remarked the viscount, bitterly, "and spend the rest of his life trying to buy back his self-respect."

He took a bunch of violets from his button-hole and pressed it daintily to his nostrils, as if to drive away the thought.

"But all Americans are not vulgar," argued Mr. Chadder, "and it's as easy to love a rich girl as a poor one."

"I hate Americans," said the youth, setting his single eyeglass in position, as though he were surveying the offending race at that moment. "They're loud-voiced, badly dressed, purse-proud, aggressive and — oh, Chadder, hang it, I can't stand them! They're all champagne and diamonds and brag."

"The men — um; yes, perhaps some of the men may be like that," said Mr. Chadder, "but we were not speaking of the men."

"And the women are vain and talkative. They tell you all they know, and more too, ten minutes after you've met them."

"It's a big subject," sighed the solicitor, evidently beyond his depth, "and I can't pretend to control your views in such matters; but a moment's serious reflection ought to convince you, my lord, that a young man in your position has a better chance in America, where titles are venerated — yes, worshipped — than in England. After all, you would not be the first man of your family whose marriage was based on other considerations than affection. It seems to me that wealth is as fair an object as political power. Your great-grandfather married the daughter of his bitterest enemy simply to end a political quarrel."

The drums throbbed in Fleet Street and the fifes shrilled piercingly.

"Rule Britannia ! Britannia rules the waves !
And Britons never shall be slaves."

"Listen to that, Chadder," cried the viscount. "Doesn't it make your blood hot again?"

A roar of voices announced the arrival of the Rajah and the Heir Apparent at Temple Bar. The sound of a trumpet rang splendidly, and the tramp of troops was heard.

“Rule Britannia ! Britannia rules the waves !

And Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.”

“Marriage with a rich American,” continued Mr. Chadder, without taking notice of the interruption, “would enrich your own country. You would be, as it were, nationalizing the wealth of your wife. I need not tell you that the income of Battlecragie — now that all the timber has been sold — is eaten up by the interest charges on the debts of the estate, and the Earl of Castlehurst is in desperate financial straits.”

“I’ve heard that my grandfather is having a hard time of it on the old place. He was hard enough on me, God knows !”

“And it may yet be your fortune,” said Mr. Chadder, pursuing his theme, “to restore your birthplace to something like its former dignity. It is a mere matter of common sense.”

The noise in the street swelled to a thunderous

tumult; the two men moved to the window and looked out. A fog was descending, and they could see the scarlet and steel and the red ensign disappearing in the mist, while the whining of the fifes came faintly through the dull clamor of the trampling multitude.

“I’d join the army if I had the physique,” said the viscount, “but my ancestors used up the vitality of the family long ago. By God! Chadder,” —and his face flushed, —“I’ll go to America. No, I’ll not sell myself to a tradesman’s daughter — I’ll leave my title behind me. If I go, I’ll go like a man, and make my way honestly. There must be some drop of the old blood in me. No, I won’t be a target for the American newspapers. Why, Chadder! I’ll take my mother’s name, Dorsay. Hugh Dorsay! That sounds democratic enough, doesn’t it? Hugh Dorsay, plain Englishman.”

“But, my lord, there might be complications.”

“Complications? Complications, Chadder? What rot! I’m an orphan, and there’s nothing to keep me in London a day longer. My grandfather has cast me out, and my creditors — bless them!

— have no idea of my present address ; and you, Chadder, you shall be the keeper of my secret. You shall forward my letters to me under cover. You, Chadder,— Chadder, the inscrutable and the ever faithful !— shall keep the curious supplied with discreet and careful tales of my wanderings in Europe or Asia or Africa, or any other bally place that occurs to you, in search of health ; and mind you keep the *Morning Post* well informed, Chadder, for the sake of— well, after all, there are a few who will miss me besides my creditors.”

“ It occurs to me that we should consult the Earl of Castlehurst,” stammered the solicitor. “ It is customary — ”

“ Never mind my grandfather,” said the viscount, flourishing his hand gayly. “ I’m my own master. Why, Chadder, you’re splendid. You’ve put me on the right track. Don’t deny it,” — the old man was shaking his head, — “ for I swear to you that I’ll do nothing in America to make you ashamed of me. I know I’m hot-headed and full of pride, but I come by it honestly. You know that, Chadder. But that’s

all past now, and some day Hugh Dorsay may surprise the man who knew him as Lord De-launay. It's like a play, isn't it?—but it's true, Chadder; I've made up my mind (it may astonish you to know that I've got a mind), and I'll start to-morrow for New York. The steamer train leaves Euston station at noon. I mean every word I say, Chadder. Hang it, old man, be my friend!—say that you'll stand by me."

There was a ring of manly sincerity in the voice and a shining enthusiasm in the young face that stormed the prejudices of the worldly-wise veteran, and he took the outstretched hand with quick emotion.

"So I will, so I will," he said; "and I'll advance you whatever money may be necessary for the voyage. Ah, it's nothing, my lord,—a matter of fifty pounds. I'll send it to your lodgings this afternoon, with a letter or two of introduction."

"You're a prince, Chadder, a bally prince!" exclaimed the youth, gratefully; "and now I'm off to make my arrangements. I'll see you at Euston station at half-past eleven to-morrow.

Good-by, Chadder. You see I've caught the American get-up-and-go spirit already. Yes, siree, by gosh!"

The heavy door clashed behind him as the viscount went down the stairs humming a tune. Turning up Fleet Street, he made his way to the Strand and walked briskly westward. His brain was in a whirl, and the shuffling, chattering crowds confused him. For the first time in his life he had been suddenly confronted with the pitiless, practical problems of life. The great multitude that moved around him in the growing fog excited his interest. How did they live, these teeming millions of London? And why did they suffer in the dirt and noise of the mighty city when they, too, might go to America? New thoughts, new sympathies, arose in him as he realized what it meant to be alone in such a place without money or friends. The grimy buildings seemed so cold and inhospitable. A ragged beggar jostled him, and he put a shilling in the outstretched hand. Then he found himself wondering why he had done it. An hour before he would have thrust the im-

pudent mendicant from him without a second thought.

It was a dream, and he would presently wake up and find himself in dear, old, warm-hearted London again. No, it was all true. He had promised Chadder to go to America and begin life over. He would go.

At the corner of Trafalgar Square he stopped, undecided where to go. He could see through the mist the monstrous heads of the lions crouching at the foot of Nelson's monument, and the dim figure of Gordon, Bible in hand. The bells of St. Martin's struck the hour, and the sound of the Westminster chimes came shivering up Parliament Street.

"I'll go and see old Muhlenberg," he thought. "Dear old tutor. I wonder what he'll say."

Ten minutes later he entered a neat brick house near Berkley Square and was shown into a cosey little room whose walls were lined with well-filled bookshelves and hung with portraits of well-known men. Sitting before an open-grate fire, with a torn manuscript on his knees, was Professor Muhlenberg, the most dis-

tinguished scholar of Oxford; a small man, with snow-white hair, close-cropped side whiskers, and clear, merry gray eyes.

"Why, Hugh!" cried the professor, rising and grasping the young man's hand; "I'm so glad to see you, my boy. Not in trouble again, I hope? Ah, you scamp! you never come to see me unless you're in a scrape. How is Lord Castlehurst—oh, yes, I forgot, your grandfather hasn't forgiven you for that last little affair. And Mademoiselle Ballafanti? I saw her in the ballet at Covent Garden last week—such eyes! such hair! such—er—ah—for shame, sir, when—"

"I'm through with all that now," said the youth, with a gesture of protest.

"Eh? What?" exclaimed the professor, with a look of surprise.

"I'm going to America," said the viscount.

"Why, what new lark is this? To America—ha! ha!" and the old man's laughter rang in the little room. "Is mademoiselle to disport her charms on the American stage?"

"Professor, I'm a ruined man. The South

London property has been sold by the creditors, and I haven't a penny left. I've decided to go to New York. There's nothing else to do."

The venerable face became instantly serious. "But there's South Africa or India."

"They're both crowded with adventurers and sharpers. I'd be lost there. I'm going to see what I can do in a white man's country."

"Good!" said the professor. "I like the idea. Really, my boy," — and the old scholar paced the room with his hands behind his back, his brows contracted, and his fine, thin mouth drawn down at the corners, — "I see no opportunities for an impoverished nobleman in England. The Americans are driving all before them. The old country has lost the knack of success. The Americans will wear themselves out in time, for they have not yet learned the admirable art of leisure: they work so furiously that they don't know how to play. But, meanwhile, England feels the pressure of the unequal competition. Our trade and industry are passing into foreign hands. As the idle aristocracy of

England becomes poorer and poorer, the power of money in society becomes more apparent. Brewers, tradesmen, mere hucksters, have thrust aside the old nobility — and, after all, why not? They have done something. In America your title — ”

“I’m going to drop my title there,” said the viscount. “Hang it, professor, I don’t propose to be laughed at.”

The old man’s eyes lit with quick humor, and he shook his head.

“Americans don’t laugh at titles, Hugh,” he said. “They are the only people in the world who really revere them. A young man of your rank and ancestry could marry the richest girl in New York or Chicago.”

“That isn’t in my plan,” exclaimed the youth. “I will take my mother’s name and make my way as a man, without any false pretences.”

“Bravo!” shouted the professor, and he slapped the viscount’s shoulder. “Hugh Dorsey! I like it. I knew a man named Stubbs” — the scholar’s face puckered into a smile — “a successful ironmonger, who made some repairs

in the buttery at All Souls. When I told him that Stubbs was a contraction of St. Albans, and that he had as much right to the name as the duke himself, what do you think he said? 'I don't want it,' said he, 'because the Stubbses amount to somethink' — ha! ha!" The little man shook with merriment.

"I don't see the point," said the viscount, coldly.

"The point," said the professor, bluntly, "is that the men of your family have been relying on the deeds of their ancestors. They have enjoyed life in a way, but each generation has been weaker than the preceding one — *necessitatis inventa sunt antiquiora quam voluptis*, — I hope you haven't forgotten your Latin, Hugh, — and if you go to New York in the right spirit you can make any name you choose to bear a name that stands for something accomplished in the present."

"That's my idea exactly."

"It's a good one. Remember Carlyle's jest about a naked peer addressing a naked House of Lords — you see the whole system is pre-

posterous when you strip it of wealth. Go to America, my boy, and God prosper you! I have a few friends there, and I can give you letters that may open the way for you. Let me see — ”

The old scholar threw his head back and closed his eyes.

“Oh, yes, there’s David Irkins, proprietor of the *New York Mail*,—an extraordinary man, sort of international proletarian, who cables messages to reigning sovereigns on all sorts of popular questions, and offers to print their answers in his newspaper. He never gets a reply, except from some little prince in the Balkans, but he keeps right on bombarding the thrones of England, Germany, Russia, and Austria, and prints every message he sends with a grand flourish. Shrewd fellow, Irkins, and knows the weaknesses of the masses—works himself into a moral rage and weeps in public over the grave of human liberty whenever the opposition party is successful at the polls. He was my pupil for a year. Irkins would make a place for you in his office.”

“But he mustn’t know my real name,” said the viscount. “He must know me only as Hugh Dorsay.”

“Then there’s William Remington, the millionaire banker,” continued the professor. “A coarse, harsh man, whose word is law to some of the greatest syndicates in America. His son was educated at Oxford, and the father sent me a draft for two hundred pounds and a letter of thanks when the boy returned home with a degree. I sent the draft back. I believe that Mr. Remington would do something for you.

“And now, Hugh,” — the professor placed his hands on the young man’s shoulders — “are you sure you are in earnest? Are you quite certain that you won’t change your mind when you see Mademoiselle Ballafanti’s pretty face again? Have you thought of what it means to leave your native country and go among strangers, to compete with men who know how to work, and will make no allowances for your pride and your lack of experience?”

“I’ve thought it all over,” said the viscount, gravely. “God help me! I’ll do my best; but”

— and his eyes flashed — “ I’d go, even if I knew I should never come back.”

“ Then I’ll write the letters now.”

Seating himself at a table, the professor wrote two notes of introduction and handed them to his visitor.

“ There is one thing you must never forget in America,” said the scholar, stroking his chin thoughtfully and looking into the pink and violet flames that flickered in the grate. “ Be orthodox. Don’t undertake to reform the country. Whenever you are consumed by a desire to remodel the manners and customs of the United States, sit down and remember the important fact that there are seventy million Americans and only one Hugh Dorsay. That will save you a lot of trouble, my boy. When you meet an American whose reformation becomes a source of serious anxiety to you, why then you must — ”

“ Yes.”

“ Marry her.”

“ Oh, pshaw ! ”

“ But don’t fall in love with the first beautiful face you see. You may find a still more beautiful

one with a fortune to match it. At your age, who knows what the future holds? It isn't necessary to be sordid or vulpine, Hugh, but if kind Heaven leads a well-born young Englishman straight to the feet of a rich American girl, why should he not fulfil his destiny and make an Englishwoman of her? In other words, my boy, don't be a fool."

"I'll think of it," said the viscount, as he rose to go. "Upon my word, I've heard more matrimonial advice to-day than I bargained for. I don't know why it is that every time an unmarried Englishman proposes to go to America, he is solemnly lectured on the subject of matrimony."

"You don't? — ha! ha!" cried the professor; "then you haven't seen many American girls. The danger is, not that you'll marry an American, but that you'll marry the first one you meet."

"Not I. Why, professor, they are simply skilful flirts, — but there, we've talked enough; and now good-by, dear old friend. I'll write to you and tell how I'm getting on. I may make a mess of it, but I'll do nothing to make you ashamed of me."

“Of course you won’t, Hugh,” said the professor, heartily. “Your blood and breeding ought to keep you honest, even if you had no innate qualities of your own. Remember that character counts for more than anything else. *Integer vitæ scelerisque purus*, and all the rest of it, eh? A clean life, a serious purpose, and industry — and who can tell but that in the free air and manly competition of America, some spark that you have inherited from the great knight whose blood runs in your veins, may catch fire?”

“Good-by, professor.”

“Good-by, my son. God prosper you!”

Thus it was that the Viscount Delaunay, heir to the bankrupt Earl of Castlehurst, found himself in a cab, under a mountain of trunks crowned by a pea-green tin bath-tub, on his way to Euston station on Saturday morning, his heart beating like a trip-hammer, and his mind filled with a confused sense of the strangeness of his adventure. The smell of the violets in his buttonhole oppressed him. The dense fog invaded his very brain.

Then, as the cab rattled along Victoria Street,

he caught sight of the massive Gothic masonry of Westminster Abbey, and impulsively calling to the driver to halt, he stepped out and walked into the penumbra of the mighty interior.

“Jolly old place,” he murmured, “nothing like it in America.”

As he walked between the monuments of dead heroes and sages of a thousand years of British conquest, a realization of what he was leaving behind him seized upon his mind. For the first time he understood the meaning of his nationality, and the Englishman rose within him. The venerable walls seemed to speak to his soul. Many a time he had strolled through the old abbey, amused by the eager enthusiasm of wandering strangers, but now the place seemed filled with ghostly voices proclaiming the greatness of his race. He found himself reading the inscriptions and wondering that he had never read them before. The shield and saddle of Henry V above the altar fascinated him. The gleaming white memorials in the Poet's Corner whispered in the shadows. On every side he saw the sculptured story of his ancestors — warriors, statesmen, men of might and renown.

A sudden sense of weakness seized him. How strong and majestic it all seemed! How enduring, how full of power and victory! Why should he have to leave England, to go forth from the home of his people a wastrel and wayfarer?

And when at last he stood in the chapel of Henry VII, and looked upon the dusty banner of his own house hanging over the carved stalls of the knights, his heart cried out in agony. The great organ of the abbey broke the silence, and through the vast hall trembled that sweetest of all hymns:—

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!”

“They were great men,” said a harsh voice. “Not like the Englishmen of to-day. Fighters, pushers, strong men!”

Turning, the viscount saw a squat, broad-shouldered old man, with hard, strongly marked features, accompanied by the smug, black-robed verger of the abbey. Beside him stood a tall

girl reading a red-covered guide-book. As the stranger pointed to the row of faded banners, the girl looked up with a smile. Never had the young Englishman seen a more beautiful face. The broad, low brow, from which the pale, yellow hair waved backward; the perfect oval of the cheeks, the tenderly curved mouth, the delicately modelled chin, the large, gray eyes, the graceful, slim neck, the almost childlike expression of sentimental wonder as she looked at the knightly emblems, compelled his eyes. He watched her with a secret thrill of pleasure until she observed his too frank glance and the color rose to her fair countenance. He felt an almost irresistible desire to speak to her, to tell her what that place meant to him.

"All Americans like this 'all," said the verger. "Ain't anything of the kind in their own country; 'ave to come over 'ere, sir."

"Yes," said the old man, with a stiff nod, "we come over here, and we go back satisfied with ourselves. These men spent their lives killing human beings, while we are learning how to feed the world. They were instruments of

death; we are instruments of life. Eh, Fanny? Not bad for me, daughter."

"I think it's simply divine," said the girl, lifting her radiant eyes to the dim banners again. "Just think of the splendid titles represented there."

"You can buy them with cash, if you have enough," growled the American. "There's hardly a title in England that isn't for sale, my girl."

"Oh, hush, father!" cried the girl, with a confused glance at the young Englishman, "we are being overheard."

The old man turned toward the viscount and hesitated.

"I trust that I've said nothing to offend you, sir," he ventured.

"Certainly not," said the young man, quietly. "I'm afraid there's more truth in what you say than most good Englishmen like to admit."

The solemn verger moved out of the hall and the Americans followed him. Then the viscount made his way to the street, and ordered the impatient cabman to hurry his horse.

When he reached Euston station he found Mr. Chadder, soberly arrayed in frock coat, tall hat, austere black cravat, and black gloves, in the midst of a babbling, hand-shaking, excited crowd. The steamer train was about to start, and the guards were closing the doors of the cars and frantically urging loitering passengers to embark. A bell was ringing violently, and the locomotive whistle shrieked a warning.

He entered a car, and, while the porter piled his bags and bundles on the seat beside him, he leaned out of the window and talked with the solicitor.

"It was awfully good of you, Chadder," he said. "They say an Englishman can't move without having his solicitor beside him; but you've been a friend, Chadder, and I won't forget it. I'll pay you back the money —"

"Don't mention it, my lord," said Mr. Chadder, snuffing and showing signs of moisture in his eyes. "God bless and protect you, sir, and keep you a good, true Englishman."

"Here," said the young man, drawing a curiously carved gold ring from his finger; "this was

given to the first Earl of Castlehurst, at Jerusalem, by the great knight Tancred. Take it as a keepsake, Chadder."

"No, no!" cried Mr. Chadder. "It's too much. Take it with you."

"Stand clear!" screamed the guard, as the train began to move.

"Take it, Chadder," urged the youth, stretching his hand toward him. "It's all I've got to give you."

"Stand clear, there!" commanded the guard.

"Take it, or I'll throw it."

The bell rang wildly, and the locomotive panted. The wheels whined and the cars creaked and clanked as the train rolled slowly onward.

With a swift motion the viscount flung the ring at Mr. Chadder. The little circle tinkled as it struck the ground and ran flashing along the level surface. And as the exile looked back he saw the burly solicitor stoop over the edge of the platform and search beside the shining steel rail of the track.

CHAPTER II

By dint of hard puffing, Mr. Martin had surrounded his kindly old head with good tobacco smoke, and his pencil scratched comfortably along under the fragrant cloud. An occasional grunt and contraction of the brows indicated the dissatisfaction of the veteran journalist with his work. Now and then he screwed his mouth sidewise, ran his hand through his snowy hair, and twisted his feet nervously about the legs of his chair, as a hard sentence halted him.

Presently he leaned back and glanced about the big room with its rows of desks and dirty white pillars. Here and there the reporters toiled over their notes, and in a distant corner, behind an iron railing, sat the city editor of the *New York Mail*, — a little, red-faced, erect man, at the sound of whose awful voice the tousle-headed office-boy started convulsively. A slant-

ing wooden structure bearing files of newspapers ran along one side of the room. The windows on the other side looked out over Broadway, and through one of them could be seen the dingy brown façade of a church and the statue of St. Paul, an open Bible in one hand, a naked sword in the other.

At the desk next to Mr. Martin's sat a tall, slender young man, whose thin, white face, flaxen hair, and mild blue eyes seemed to attract the old man's attention. In spite of his straight back and graceful bearing, there was something in the flat breast and almost feminine head and neck that indicated physical weakness. His brow and nose had the lines of a Greek masterpiece, his pale temples were blue-veined, but his mouth was soft and characterless.

As the young man raised his eyes from his desk and pressed his pencil thoughtfully against his lips, he observed the glance of the veteran and smiled wearily.

Mr. Martin winked solemnly. It was Mr. Martin's favorite signal of good nature.

"Hard work, eh?"

"I'm not up to it yet, I'm afraid," said the young man. "I don't know my way about."

"Let's see what you've written," said Mr. Martin, moving to the other desk and bending over, with an air of friendly interest.

"Your style's too lean—shows the ribs," he muttered as he read the white sheets. "Irkins likes plenty of color and dash. You must put in more ginger—"

"More — ?"

"Ginger, my son. You're not writing for an encyclopædia. Just tear the words up by the roots, with the earth sticking to them. M'm, m'm, oh, this will never do—there are no 'tramcars' in New York; and—gee whilikins! —'the barman in Alderman Murphy's public house —' Ha! ha! that's great! Ha! ha! Why, for heaven's sake, what's that?"

The young man had nervously fastened a single eyeglass in front of his right eye.

"My monocle."

"Don't do it, my son," said the old man, gently patting him on the shoulder. "When you have to use windows on your face, use two."

You mustn't mind advice from an old-timer like me. A dandy has no place in an American newspaper office ; and a man who looks at things with one eye when God has given him two, runs the risk of being taken for a fool — there now, shake hands ; I didn't mean to say it just that way. I'm 'Bob' Martin, my son, old enough to be your grandfather."

"I'm Hugh Dorsay," said the young man, allowing the offending monocle to drop from his eye and grasping the outstretched hand with a look of relief.

"Been long in New York?"

"Just a week."

Mr. Martin drew his chair over and sat down beside Hugh. Little by little he learned of the stranger's loneliness in the great city, his desire to win his way by hard work, and his absolute lack of practical experience. The old man's heart went out to the friendless youth, and he uttered many a quaint saying of wisdom as the conversation became more familiar.

"Somehow I feel that I shall always be a foreigner in America," said Hugh. "We

“speak the same language, but the blood doesn’t mix.”

“There you’re wrong, my son,” said the veteran. “The trouble with every Englishman who comes here is that he looks on an American as a sort of second-hand Britisher. He doesn’t know the difference between lion blood and eagle blood. Now, when a lion eats an eagle, the eagle becomes a lion ; and, likewise, when an eagle eats a lion, the lion becomes an eagle. The blood’ll mix all right ; it all depends on which stomach does the mixing. Do you catch the idea?”

“You mean that I must become an American?”

“That’s the only kind of an Anglo-American alliance you’ll ever live to see, my son. You can wear feathers or fur, but you can’t wear both at the same time.”

“But we Anglo-Saxons have a common history, Mr. Martin. That ought to make it easier for us to understand each other and be good friends.”

“We Anglo-Saxons? Why, the history of the people you are living among is the history of England, of Ireland, of Germany, of Austria, of Italy, of Poland and Russia and Scandinavia

and Africa; our blood is drawn from every country. We are the descendants of the whole world. We Anglo-Saxons?—there, there, my son, I always slop over when I get on that subject.”


The blood had risen to the old man's head, and his deep gray eyes sparkled as he shook Hugh's hand again.

“Where are you stopping, Mr. Dorsay?” he said.

“I live in the Waldorf-Astoria. Got a little room near the roof.”

“That's bad. You'd better get into some good, home-like place, among plain people who'll take an interest in you. By thunder!”—the gray eyes kindled with a swift expression of kindness—“come out to my place and I'll see if we can't find you a home somewhere near. I have a mighty comfortable little house on Long Island Sound, near New Rochelle. Lots of trees and rocks and good salt water. I believe you'd like it there. It's a quiet spot, right out in the open, and only half an hour from the city.”

“I'd like to go,” said Hugh, his heart warming



to the new-found friend. "New York is so noisy, everybody seems so busy, the people in the streets walk so fast—it is all so confusing and so tiresome."

"You'll see a real American girl, too."

"Does she live with you?"

"My daughter," said Mr. Martin, with a look of pride and tenderness. "She's all I have now."

Before the day was done, Hugh had been introduced to ten or twelve members of the *Mail* staff by Mr. Martin. There was "Jim" Smiley, a jaunty young man, with a curling black mustache, immense hooked nose, and keen dark eyes. His crimson cravat, speckled waistcoat, and patent-leather shoes were matched by the gold-headed cane which lay across the desk. "He's known as the American Dickens," whispered the old man. Then there was Mr. Barrocks, the political reporter, a huge blond man, with a bald head, who smoked cigarettes incessantly; General Casey, an Irish patriot, who had served in a South American army and indignantly resigned his command because the dusky President had ordered him to kill and cook a chicken for him; Mr.

Tobin, another Irish patriot, who suspected that General Casey was a British informer and stared fiercely at Hugh when he noticed his English accent; Mr. Carmer, the "news hustler," a lame man with curiously beautiful forehead, hawk nose, and retreating chin; and Mr. Addison, the "society reporter," a jolly little fat man, who lisped, and made jokes that nobody laughed at but himself.

It was all strange and surprising to the young aristocrat. None of the staff seemed to have the slightest personal interest in the matters they wrote of, save to make a "good story." A spirit of earnestness pervaded the place, and sometimes enthusiasm ran high, but nobody appeared to have any sense of public responsibility. Their business was to write the daily history of the community in the most interesting manner, and to "beat" the other newspapers. Private opinion seemed to have disappeared in the stern drill of editorial discipline.

He was astonished to learn that the modern news-hunter was as well fed, well dressed, and conventional in his life as other men — as accurate,

industrious, and orthodox as the million commonplace men who envied him his imaginary frolics in a non-existent Arcadia. The life was disgustingly respectable and regular. There were no enchanting quips and witticisms, no scholarly and profound discussions of life, no genius starving in garrets, no picturesque creditors haunting shadowy stairways, and no ragged martyrs to conscience.

Hugh won his footing in this fiercely competitive atmosphere slowly and with many rebuffs. His amiable manners made up in part for ignorance of his surroundings. The spontaneous and hearty friendship of Mr. Martin did much to lessen the rigors and anxieties of his position; but his sensitive nature received many shocks. He discovered that the light-hearted Bohemians to be found on the outer edges of newspaper life were mere vagabonds, plucking the fragments of livelihood from journalism, but playing no part in it, moral invalids and incompetents. On the other hand, the few grave men who sat editorially close to the heart of things and commanded the opinions and passions of

the multitude were removed far beyond the rim of his grinding routine. He heard of them, but he never saw them.

Late one afternoon Hugh was surprised to receive instructions to report in person to Mr. Irkins, the proprietor, in the great man's private office on the floor below. His first effort to see Mr. Irkins had been a failure. In answer to the letter of introduction which Hugh delivered to the attendant, the proprietor of the *Mail* sent word that he should "report to the city editor."

As he entered the little room, which was cluttered with newspapers, books, maps, and curious trophies from foreign countries, scattered about on tables and chairs or heaped on the floor in random confusion, he saw a tall, gaunt man, whose pallid face contrasted strangely with his pointed red beard and brilliant brown eyes. It was a mediæval visage, hollow-cheeked, bony, and fierce. The lank, loose figure sprawled in a cushioned chair, one leg thrown over the side arm. Notwithstanding the careless attitude, there was something commanding in the countenance, a suggestion of savage power and alert-

ness. A lock of coarse hair hung satyr-like over the slanting white forehead, and two deep wrinkles between the bristling, tawny eyebrows indicated the habit of mental concentration.

The master of modern journalism sat up straight and nodded a welcome to the slim young recruit.

"Come right in, Mr. Dorsay," he said, in a clear, musical voice, with a wave of his hand. "I haven't had a chance to see you since I got Professor Muhlenberg's letter. I hope they are treating you well upstairs."

The great brown eyes seemed to penetrate Hugh's brain. He had never before encountered such an intense glance. It was like looking into the eyes of some wild animal.

"If I could have something more serious to do," said Hugh. "It's very interesting, I'm sure, but I'd rather try editorial writing."

"Now, Mr. Dorsay, don't begin by being inspired," said Mr. Irkins, with a frown.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I don't quite understand."

"The inspired man" — the brown eyes seemed

to grow black — “knows it all at the beginning. A man who knows everything has nothing more to learn. I got that idea first from old Muhlenberg at Oxford. The world has taught me the truth of it since. Don’t, don’t, whatever you do, don’t be inspired. Don’t write your opinions when you have no opinions. Don’t—but really, Mr. Dorsay, all I mean is that you must learn something about this country as a news-gatherer before you can hope to rise to the dignity of an editorial writer. A man may be born a reporter, but an editorial writer is a slow growth.”

Hugh moved restlessly in his seat. He felt uncomfortable and embarrassed in the presence of the glowering eyes. Everybody in New York thundered advice at him. It seemed to be an American habit. His individuality was beaten down by the force of opinion that rode rough-shod over his inexperience and moral adolescence. It was a new and painful contact with the world.

“Perhaps I have mistaken my calling, Mr. Irkins,” he began, with a show of emotion,

"and if you think that I should withdraw from journalism —"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Irkins. "You are too sensitive altogether. You will get over that. Journalism will knock the opinions out of you, unless you have opinions that can't be knocked out. It all depends on the sort of stuff you are made of. Now, I have a very important matter to place in your hands. I want you to see William Remington, who has just returned from England, where he has been organizing a sort of international leather syndicate. It is a part of the system which is breaking down British trade and extending our own. Get all you can from him. We are on the verge of a great industrial and commercial revolution, and the great captains of industry developed in the United States will soon conquer England. I want you to bring that fact out strongly in your article. It will appeal to the pride of the public."

"But there is a very cruel side to the story," said Hugh, growing paler. "There is the ruin of thousands of English homes, the sufferings of women and children —"

"Splendid!" cried Mr. Irkins, with a radiant smile of admiration. "You are a born newspaper man. You have the imagination that sees the inside as well as the outside of a fact. Splendid! splendid!"—the eyes shone with pleasure. "It will make a great story. Bring out the human side of it. Moral sentiment is the secret of good writing. After you get the facts from Remington, describe an imaginary Englishman driven from home by the American trusts. Why, Mr. Dorsay, it's a great opportunity. You ought to be able to paint the picture to the very life—a titled English swell, with an ancestry a mile long, forced actually to work for his living."

The idea seemed to please the proprietor of the *Mail*, and a sudden fit of laughter convulsed the gaunt figure.

"And if I were such an Englishman," said Hugh, controlling his desire to seize the red beard and smite the bony face, "would you consider it a laughing matter?"

The agony of his position was almost unbearable. He dug his nails into the palms of his

hands in the effort to hide his pain. He felt the blood of his knightly forbears leaping in his heart. But the power of the brown eyes that mocked his pride imbued him with a feeling of lonely helplessness.

“If you felt like writing your own funeral, I should call you a man of wit, with a sense of proportion, — something that God has not given to every Englishman.” The terrible eyes were reading his soul again. “And now, Mr. Dorsay, if you’ll excuse me, — I’m a busy man, you know, — some night I’ll have you up to dinner and we’ll talk about old Muhlenberg and dear old stupid London.”

Hugh rose and left the room. His first contact with the omnipotent irreverence of American journalism had shattered his enthusiasm. It was true that Mr. Irkins could not suspect that he was talking to an English nobleman reduced to beggary by the merciless power of which he had boasted. That secret was safe in the keeping of his London solicitor. But how would it be possible for him to endure the bitter humiliations of life in these new

conditions? Heretofore he had thought little about his nationality. England had been to him the centre of the world, the citadel of civilization, the home of the all-conquering Anglo-Saxon. Her enemies were men of other blood and other speech, trained to hatred by centuries of war. She had given birth to nations beyond the seas,—Australia, Canada, and the United States; to his mind they had been alike in a common, Anglo-Saxon sentiment, uncouth and raw compared with the motherland, but united by ties of kinship and a thousand similarities of thought and custom. He had judged the American people by the few Americans he had seen in London, and secretly despised them for grovelling before the things they pretended to hate at home.

But the America that looked at him through the eyes of David Irkins was a devouring monster of energy and audacity that gloated over his weakness and challenged his breeding. His English blood grew hot within him. He felt a deep longing for power to retaliate upon these haughty vulgarians, who trampled down the most

sacred traditions of other people, loud-voiced, coarse, and masterful.

Then he remembered that he was alone and unknown in the metropolis of a great continent, and that he must either announce himself as the Viscount Delaunay, and take up a life of hopeless sham, or bend himself to the forces that environed him in New York.

As he left the office the lights were twinkling in Broadway and thousands of quick-walking men moved uptown in the early twilight. Looking upward he saw the rusty, brown spire of St. Paul's chapel, a star sparkling through the branches of the graveyard trees, and the stern figure of St. Paul.

He went with the crowd and was overwhelmed by a sense of the mighty power that swept him along, jostling, jamming, but never halting. It was the vast strength that had been slowly gathering for a hundred years, suddenly stretching forth its arms to the corners of the earth. The towering buildings emblazoned with strangely foreign names, the swift, clanging electric street cars, the restless stream of tense faces, the nerve-

exciting movement of the multitude, the feeling of ceaseless effort that brooded in the noise, filled him with an odd terror. He remembered the picture of the first Earl of Castlehurst, in the great hall of Battlecragie, a heavy-limbed, fierce giant, with yellow hair and savage blue eyes, that shone like the edge of his ponderous axe, a trampler of men and nations, fearless and intolerant of opposition. The spirit of his rough ancestor seemed to walk abroad in that pouring Broadway multitude.

But the signs on the buildings amazed him. Jews from Germany, Jews from Poland, Jews from Portugal, Jews from Palestine, Jews from every tribe of the wonderful race—these were the impregnable tenants of that majestic highway of wealth. The pride and power of renascent Israel spoke from every window and doorway. A man of Hugh's blood had reigned in old Jerusalem, but Godfrey de Bouillon himself might ride down Broadway now and find the reassembled fugitives of the Middle Ages possessed of a power transcending sword or axe, rising again to their ancient place in the world.

The pregnant symbolry of Broadway stirred the youth profoundly. He had never been much of a thinker. His life in England had been too careless, too narrow, and too full of headlong frolic for serious reflection. He had never questioned the world which gave him his living. But the immensity of human endeavor which pressed him on all sides, the reversal of old-world conditions in this new land, aroused his imagination. If these thousands of men with unpronounceable oriental names, who had been hunted like wild beasts for centuries by triumphant Christianity, could ascend to wealth and power so quickly in New York, might not he, too, the descendant of conquerors, reshape the broken fortunes of his house? The thought filled him with hope, and he forgot the jeering voices that taunted his nationality. He felt himself a sovereign commanding the gates of opportunity to open wide. His heart grew large. He lifted his head high and walked with a prouder step.

Then he recalled his mission to Mr. Remington, and realizing that the hour was late, he entered a crowded electric car.

"Step lively!" shouted the conductor, as Hugh got on the platform; "Move along forward!" and the conductor prodded him in the back unceremoniously.

"Please don't do that," cried Hugh, indignantly.

"Aw, g'wan! Move forward!—plenty of room inside!" roared the conductor, thrusting him headlong against a fat little man, who clung desperately to a leather strap to keep himself from falling.

Down came Hugh's spirit to the earth again. No, it was useless to struggle against the brutal force that dominated New York, the ruffian egotism that invaded all personal rights. He hated it with a hatred born of impotency, this free-and-easy privilege of affrontive democracy.

"Here's your street," shrieked the conductor, when the car stopped. "Step lively now"—as Hugh left the platform—"and don't get red-headed, young feller."

Unconsciously Hugh set his monocle to his eye and stared haughtily. The conductor threw

his head back and shook with derisive laughter.

"Same to you, sir," he chuckled, sticking a silver half-dollar against one eye and throwing out his chest, as the car moved on, leaving Hugh in the street, trembling with rage.

CHAPTER III

WHEN William Remington realized that he was living in a world of tired men, anxious to escape from the strain of competition, he also discovered the principle of industrial monopoly. As the consciousness of this tremendous truth penetrated his worldly mind, the New York banker felt as Franklin did when his kite drew from the clouds the secret of electricity. He saw the world and its people in a new light. When men grew eloquent about the sacredness of individual rights and opportunities, they were thinking of themselves and not of others.

Mr. Remington preached the doctrine of non-competitive economy, not to the irrelevant masses — what had they to do with such matters? — but to the rival proprietors of a particular industry. It was a lazy man's, a coward's, gospel, but it found favor with men working at white heat and seeking for some way out of the increasing strain

of the struggle. The matter was simple to Mr. Remington's mind and, with the assistance of his lawyer, he reduced it to the quality of a scientific certainty. Having secured in writing the privilege of buying each factory engaged in the industry, at an exaggerated price, he organized the whole industry into a single corporation and persuaded the original proprietors to take their pay in shares of the giant organization, proving clearly that, with competition destroyed, the company could fix its own prices and compel the public to pay dividends hitherto undreamed of.

That was the beginning of Mr. Remington's great fortune. He had discredited the feudal idea of competition, and established the modern principle of assimilation or monopoly. It was a scientific theory toward which the human race had been growing for ages. It was the true goal of enlightened progress. It eliminated sentiment and all other factors which had hindered the evolution of an un wasteful industrial system. To all who complained that he was taking away from the young men of his country their chance to compete, he replied · "The

world is wide. Let them become monopolists themselves and they will never complain again." Which answer established him in some sort as a wit and philosopher.

Notwithstanding the boon which Mr. Remington had conferred upon his unappreciative countrymen, he sought no public recognition, and was content to work out his plans as secretly as the vigilance of prying journalism would permit. Other men might wear out their lives and fortunes in the pursuit of imaginary political power, but Mr. Remington knew that, in the end, the force of money controlled all other things; and the politicians might strut about before the multitude in the robes of authority, but, after all, so he believed, they were the creatures of his hand and will.

Under the pressure of American competition the industries of Europe began to fail. Mr. Remington discovered that the manufacturers of Great Britain and the Continent were as eager to find relief from the stress of rivalry as those of New York and Chicago had been. He conceived a plan of international monopoly, and

his lazy man's ideal of an industrial Nirvana found favor in London. He began to feel the arteries of world-power pulsing under his steady hand. The mightiest captains of industry and finance sought his friendship and shrank from his opposition. Whatever thrills of pride this secret sovereignty might have stirred in his breast, the banker preserved an outward attitude of stolid apathy.

His brownstone palace in New York, with its cathedral-like doors of stained glass, was a sort of domestic fortress, from which he looked out upon a conquered community with cynical contempt. The brilliant caperings of fashionable society, the splashings and sputterings of art and literature, the bellowings of politics, were mere foolishness. To please his wife and daughter he built a marvellous Roman bath in his house, and gathered art treasures from all countries. The canvases of Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Botticelli, Rubens, and Murillo rivalled the masterpieces of modern painters on his walls. A fragment of the frieze of the Parthenon, found in an Athenian house, stood in the hallway oppo-

site to a bronze statue of Titus by Cellini, smuggled out of Italy by Mr. Remington's agent. Priceless chandeliers of rock crystal from a French palace reflected a hundred electric lights in the vast drawing-room, whose plush-hung walls, costly modern furniture, and gilded piano were strangely out of harmony with the triumphs of ancient art that met the eye on all sides. Every device of ease and luxury that money could procure was to be found in Mr. Remington's house.

Yet there was a subtle atmosphere of melancholy in the banker's home. His wife, a tall, angular woman, with greenish gray eyes and an aggressive nose that reminded one of the Duke of Wellington, had social ambitions that were frustrated by her husband's brutal indifference to the amenities of social life. The power that drained wealth from millions of helpless toilers withered up the humanities. The vengeance of ruined men and women worked into the springs of social happiness and poisoned them. Her son had entered the army as a lieutenant, and was serving in the Indian country.

Her daughter, a girl of rare beauty and accomplishments, was likely to become the wife of some millionaire manufacturer, if Mr. Remington could have his way. To every delicate suggestion of the social advantages which a European title might bring to their child, her husband had answered only with sneers. Titled foreigners, he said, were generally fortune-hunters, who neglected their wives and reserved their money and their love for mistresses. None of his money should pay the debts or minister to the vices of a worthless English lord or degenerate French count. Fanny should marry a man of her own country, fit to take care of her.

To Mrs. Remington's mind, an international marriage was the sure way to the social prestige for which her soul hungered. An ancient title would lift the family out of the doubtful status of the newly rich. The daughters of other American millionnaires had married English noblemen and brought the haughtiest of the Knickerbockers to their feet. At each fresh defeat her passion grew fiercer, and, while

she encouraged her husband in his financial pilgrimages to London, it was only that she might advance her cherished matrimonial plan.

Her daughter was surrounded by every influence that could arouse in her a romantic interest in the British peerage. The novels she read had titled heroes, and her songs were of gallant knights and princely champions. She pored over books that pictured the stately splendors of hoary English castles. All the romance of the world began and ended in Burke's Peerage or the Almanack de Gotha. Her warm imagination was fed on tales of brilliant social ceremonies in historic palaces.

Mrs. Remington guarded her daughter against the candid advances of rich American suitors. She inspired her with a worldly wisdom that eluded the amorous intrigues of cunning matrons and repelled the tender attentions invited by her youth and beauty. None but a man of noble blood might approach that well-disciplined heart. When Prince Charming came and fitted the crystal slipper to her shapely little foot,

it would be time to talk of marriage ; meanwhile the beautiful blue eyes looked coldly upon men.

It was of this alluring subject that the Remingtons were talking over their coffee, when Hugh Dorsay's card and Professor Muhlenberg's letter of introduction were brought into the dining room by the urbane butler.

"A visitor?" asked Mrs. Remington, as her husband tossed the card on the table and read the note.

"A young Englishman — graduate of Oxford," said the banker ; "comes to New York to find a living. Why, Fanny, here's your chance — ha ! ha ! He isn't an American, and he's looking for a fortune."

"Mr. Remington!" exclaimed the matron, severely.

"Now don't, my dear," said the old man, shielding himself with upraised hands from the reproachful green eyes. "Let's go and see him. I'm sorry Jack isn't here to meet an Oxford man. Come, Fanny."

As they entered the splendid drawing-room,

Mr. Remington held out his hand cordially to the pale young visitor.

“Glad to see you, sir — my wife — my daughter — be seated.”

Hugh drew back in surprise.

“Why, I’m — I’m sure we’ve met before,” he stammered. “It was — oh, yes, it was in Westminster Abbey.”

“That’s so,” said the banker, smiling as he remembered the scene, “and I think I was ill-mannered enough to remark” — with a triumphant look at his wife — “that an American girl could buy almost any title in England if she had enough money. It must have sounded —”

“One must have his little jest,” said Hugh, politely. Miss Remington’s face crimsoned. Her mother’s eyes were reproachfully austere. She gave a little hard cough of warning, and frowned at her husband. “Besides, it’s only too true that there have been English noblemen who have married American heiresses under circumstances that justify suspicion.”

“But their wives?” exclaimed Miss Remington, eagerly. “Did they count for nothing?”

"I'm sure I've always felt that they were lucky to get such wives," said Hugh, gallantly, "and that they didn't deserve them."

"Well, I'm glad to see you, sir," said Mr. Remington. "Any Oxford man, any friend of Professor Muhlenberg, is welcome here, even," — the shrewd eyes flashed a sarcastic challenge to Mrs. Remington — "even if you haven't got a title to sell."

The color started to Hugh's thin face. For a moment he suspected that the secret of his title had been betrayed. The lights swam before his eyes. But the next instant his doubts vanished. He saw the tall girl — more radiantly lovely than she had seemed in the gloomy old abbey — smiling at him with an expression of willing friendship, the sweet lips parted, and the dainty head, with its soft coil of faintly golden hair, bent in an attitude of earnest interest. The virile forces within him stirred as he smelled the rose she wore on her bosom and felt the frank impact of her beauty.

"I've nothing to sell in New York but the labor of my hands and brain," he said, "and that doesn't seem to be a very valuable commodity."

Hugh's courtly manner seemed to impress Mrs. Remington. There was an easy grace about him, an intangible courtesy in his bearing, that aroused her admiration.

"I'm sure you'll succeed, Mr. Dorsay," murmured the matron. "You come from a country that —"

"Has seen better days," suggested Mr. Remington, grimly.

"Mr. Remington!" cried his wife, with a look of anger. "How can you?"

"That's all right, my dear," said the banker, laughingly. "No one knows it better than Mr. Dorsay. That's why he has come to New York. This is a young man's country, and it's a young woman's country, too, although Fanny doesn't think so —"

"Mr. Remington!" The green eyes flashed in protest.

"It's papa's way of teasing us," explained Miss Remington. "He thinks that the British peerage is an organized conspiracy against the marriageable maidens of America, and that, unless we are careful, we shall all be carried off by the robber

barons and shut up in their castles ; and the sorry truth is " — she tossed her shapely head — " that the robber barons stay in their castles, and won't even look at us."

Hugh was staring at a curious gold ring on her finger. It fascinated him.

" Why, Mr. Dorsay — "

" That ring, Miss Remington. What a curious thing."

" It is odd, isn't it? " and she held her hand out. " I picked it up in the railway station in London."

He recognized the ring which Tancred had given to his ancestor at the siege of Jerusalem and which he had thrown to Mr. Chadder from the window of the railway carriage the day he left London. His heart beat wildly at the sight of the gleaming circlet that connected him with a glorious past. There was a lump in his throat.

" See how the carving has been worn," she said, slipping the ring from her finger. " I can't make it out. It must be very old."

Hugh took the ring, still warm, and the touch thrilled him with mingled pain and pleasure.

"It's a crusader's ring," he said, bending over it to conceal his emotion. "That is the sign of the crusades, the lamb and the cross—see! there is the lamb's head."

"How romantic—and to find it in London, too. I'm sure it must be an omen of the future."

Her eyes shone, and she clapped her hands. Mrs. Remington beamed and nodded her head in approval. The old banker sniffed contemptuously.

"Probably a copy from the antique," he remarked.

"No," said Hugh, tremulously. "It's genuine. See!"

He pressed his thumb nail against the carving and twisted the ring with a jerk. A tiny door concealed behind the carved tablet flew open, revealing a miniature enamelled head of Christ, crowned with thorns.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the astonished banker.

Miss Remington uttered a little scream of delight and, throwing her arm around her mother's neck, kissed her cheek.

“Wonderful ! really wonderful !” said Mrs. Remington, solemnly.

With another swift motion Hugh closed the secret shutter and handed the ring back to Miss Remington, who tried in vain to open it again. She knit her fair brows and pouted as she endeavored to solve the mystery of Tancred’s ring.

“It’s too provoking,” she said. “I can’t find the spring that opens it.”

“No one can do that unless he has the old crusader blood in his veins,” said Hugh, with a strange twinkle in his eyes. Already he could feel his soul rising from the depression in which it had lived since his arrival in America. These people, in spite of their wealth and power, were mere flies on the wheel of society.

“Then how is it that you could open it? Have you —”

“Oh, no,” he answered in alarm. “I’m just a plain Englishman. I learned that trick from an English viscount, a direct descendant of Godfrey de Bouillon, the knight who rescued the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels.”

"Isn't it enchanting!" cried the girl. "Do tell us what he was like."

"Really, he was nothing extraordinary. Just such another fellow as I am."

"But he must have been big and strong, with lion eyes and a fierce mustache."

"No, he had no mustache, and he had mild blue eyes, just like mine; and he was thin and narrow-shouldered, just like me, poor chap; and the last time I saw him he didn't have a shilling to his name."

Hugh had to struggle hard to keep himself from laughing while he drew his own portrait. A spirit of deviltry seized him. His humility vanished, and he grew superior to the splendid chandeliers, the pictures, the gilded piano, and the costly magnificences that had overwhelmed him when he entered the room. After all, blood was the thing, and money could not buy a noble ancestry. What a farce the world was!

"But the crusaders were giants."

"Ah, yes, Miss Remington; but they died a long time ago, and their descendants have been degenerated by lives of idle ease."

"How I'd like to meet a real descendant of Godfrey de Bouillon!"

"What a privilege to be the wife of such a man," murmured Mrs. Remington, rolling her green eyes at the thought.

"And would you marry such a man if he were poor and unable to earn his own living?" asked Hugh, looking straight into the eyes of the beautiful girl. "Would you, really? Pardon me, it isn't a fair question, of course, but —"

"Yes, I really would. There, now!" And she nodded her head defiantly toward her father, and kissed the ring on her finger. "Don't frown, you naughty papa; you know that you'd be glad to have a son-in-law like that. Now, now, now, don't be cross —"

"Not by a hanged sight!" said the old banker, roughly.

"Why, papa, where's your imagination and your poetry?"

"Stuff!" growled Mr. Remington. "It takes a lot of imagination and poetry to stand off creditors and fix up a rickety castle that a dog couldn't live in without getting rheumatism."

But there was a sly flicker in his deep eyes, indicating that the idea was not so offensive to him as he pretended.

"Besides," he added in a gentler tone, "you haven't found your titled descendant of the crusaders yet. Better not arrange for the marriage till he turns up, — eh, Fanny?"

The temptation to reveal his name and rank at once was almost too strong for Hugh, and the avowal trembled for an instant on his lips. Why should he not acknowledge his birthright and seize this opportunity? Then he realized that he would place himself in a false position, that he would be looked upon as a vulgar trickster. He had gone too far, and his steps could not be retraced. He grew dizzy, and a cold dew stood on his forehead. He stammered and leaned faintly against the back of his chair, with a despairing consciousness that he had lost the right to his own name.

"And now, my dear," said Mr. Remington, blandly, "Mr. Dorsay looks tired, and I suppose he wants to have a little talk with me in the library. Never fear, you'll have plenty of time

in the future to discuss the dukes and earls and what-do-you-call-'ems, and the castles and creditors and — This way, Mr. Dorsay," rising and leading the way to the hall staircase. "Good night, my dear ; good night, Fanny. Don't marry yourself off in your sleep, my child. Come, Mr. Dorsay."

Hugh took leave of the ladies, and as he followed the banker out of the room he caught sight of Miss Remington in a mirror kissing his ring again and again ; and his heart sank within him.

Mr. Remington's library was a large, square room lined with book shelves and mysterious little cupboards on top of which were bronze busts of Washington, Lincoln, and Grant. In the middle of the room was a huge table-desk, littered with pamphlets and documents. There was a clock and a telephone receiver on a stand beside it. In spite of the rows of handsomely bound volumes, there was a suggestion of hard work about the place that impressed the young man as he sat down in the stiff-backed chair toward which Mr. Remington motioned him.

The banker lit a cigar and stood before the fire

that played in rose and violet flames within the fantastic cast-iron grate. He clasped his hands behind his back and rocked gently on his heels, looking keenly at his visitor, while the smoke slipped through his lips and curled upward. Now that he was alone with Mr. Remington, Hugh felt less confident. He noticed the square jaws and hard, straight mouth, and there was a lurking sternness in the eyes.

"Now, Mr. Dorsay," said Mr. Remington, curtly, "I presume that you want to talk to me about your own affairs. Of course you must appreciate the fact that a young man ignorant of the customs of the country cannot expect too much in the way of an opening at first. I shall have to think over the matter before I can find a position suited to your inexperience."

"Thank you, sir," said Hugh, "but I have already secured a place. I'm on the staff of the *Mail*."

"Wha-a-at?" Mr. Remington started as if he had been struck in the face. "The *Mail*, you say?"

"Yes," said Hugh, with an air of pride, "and

my first important assignment is to interview you on international trusts. Mr. Irkins himself sent me — said it was a great opportunity.”

The old man’s eyes blazed, and his face grew purple. He clenched his fists and stamped on the floor. The terrible white eyebrows seemed to bristle.

“I’d have you know, sir,” he said, choking with anger, “that no newspaper man is allowed to enter my doors. I never talk to the newspapers.”

“Why, I thought everybody talked to the newspapers in New York,” cried Hugh, shrinking before the infuriate banker. “I owe you an apology, sir. I should have mentioned my mission at first, but the warmth of my welcome made me forget —”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Remington, suddenly mollified, “I shouldn’t have forgotten that you brought me a letter from Professor Muhlenberg, and besides,” — there was a sardonic gleam in his eyes, — “you couldn’t be expected to know what a devil out of hell that man Irkins is, — a sneaking, meddling, unscrupulous scoundrel who keeps the

country stirred up against every man who has a dollar."

Mr. Remington lit his cigar, which had gone out, and blew a great cloud of smoke straight before him. He gave a harsh little chuckle and shook his head.

"So Irkins wanted you to draw me out? — the snake! Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Dorsay, now that I've thought it over; I'll give you an interview — it'll help you out, I know — but it must be understood that hereafter you are to be received in my house as a friend of Professor Muhlenberg and not as a newspaper man. With that understanding, you can go ahead and interview me. Pitch in, sir."

The old man squared his huge shoulders, threw his head back, and watched the circles of smoke ascending slowly to the ceiling.

There was an absolute silence for a moment.

"Go ahead, Mr. Dorsay. Pump me dry." Again the harsh chuckle.

Hugh looked at the strong figure. He felt weak and empty in the presence of a master mind of finance. The old sense of helpless-

ness took possession of him. His limbs trembled.

"The truth is, Mr. Remington," he said appealingly, "that I don't know enough about business to ask intelligent questions."

"Oh, well," muttered the banker, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, "in that case, I'll have to help you out."

In a few plain words Mr. Remington described the conditions which had given to America the primacy of the industrial and financial world, the progress of invention and the development of skill and energy in a continent of unrivalled natural riches, the consolidation of industries, and the gradual reduction of the cost of manufacture.

"We have many of the British industries just where we want them," he said. "They can't stand our competition, and it will be better for all to extend the principle of non-competitive production to both countries, and, in time, to all the leading industrial nations. In other words, we are beginning to absorb British industries. The effect of this policy will in time form a powerful political bond between Great Britain

and the United States. Business, sir, is the final controlling factor in all human affairs, individual, national, or international. This new development of our national influence will afford the best guarantee of peace that the world can find. During my visit to England I succeeded in making arrangements that will in time give the control of the leather industry to the United States."

Hugh had been taking notes.

"I'd like an illustration," he suggested.

"I secured control of several important factories, among others the South London Boot and Shoe Works—"

"Good God! You — Mr. Remington — you —"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," gasped Hugh, as he realized that he was face to face with the man who had ruined him and made him an exile from his country and rank. "I was thinking of a friend who was beggared by the forced sale of the South London Works. It was very, very painful."

His voice broke and he shook like one in a fit.

"Some worn-out aristocrat, too lazy or too weak to work," remarked the old man.

"Yes, yes, something of that sort" — his voice was hoarse; "a poor devil brought up to think that the world was made only for him. But it was a ghastly thing, Mr. Remington. It drove him out of England without a penny in his pocket."

Again Hugh had to wrestle to keep himself from declaring his name and title and telling the banker the story of his ruin.

"Good thing for him," said Mr. Remington, unfeelingly; "he'll have to work now. It'll make a man of him. Why, sir," — he took a long puff at his cigar and blew a wreath of smoke toward the ceiling, — "if I hadn't learned to work and think and plan, I'd never have been able to get him out of the leather business. From the moment we were born, that Englishman and I have been unconsciously approaching this test of our capacity, he drifting along idly, living on the fat of the land, and ignoring the warnings that stare every man in the face; and I preparing myself night and day, studying, watch-

ing, moving closer and closer, until finally I caught him asleep. I tell you, sir, it's the working out of God's will. We are living in a strenuous age, and the man who forgets that fact is bound to fail."

Hugh watched the banker with a sort of terror. His ancestors had been men like this; men who trampled their enemies beneath their feet,— but they had risked their lives and shed their blood in pursuit of power and glory. This short, fat man, who gloated over the approaching downfall of an empire founded by a race of warriors, had never faced a naked blade. His victories were won by the cunning of finance in cold blood. That short arm and pudgy red hand had never struck an open blow in the field. That eye, glowing under the craggy white brow, had never challenged a foe to manly combat; yet Hugh felt like a child in the presence of the silent force that seemed to radiate from the commonplace man who smoked his cigar so contentedly.

While he gazed at Mr. Remington in a stupor of fascination, half dreaming, a shadow fell before him, and a tall, slim figure glided forward. Miss

Remington threw her arms around her father's neck and kissed him.

"There, you wicked papa," she said, with crimsoned cheeks and beaming eyes. "You forgot that, and I brought it to you, and we mustn't forget—" with a kind, sidewise glance that stirred Hugh's blood—"that we haven't asked Mr. Dorsay to dinner. I must, must, hear more about those dear crusaders; and so we'll make it Friday evening, when Senator Bradford will be here. You know, we're in town out of season, and must be going to the country."

"I'm sure we'll be very happy, if Mr. Dorsay will honor us," said Mr. Remington.

"Delighted," answered Hugh, looking thankfully at the beauty.

"Mr. Dorsay, I'm sorry to say, has entered the service of the *Mail*," said the banker. "Of course, my dear, that won't make any difference in our welcome, but—well, it is too bad that he's got among those infernal scribblers."

"Fie, Mr. Dorsay!" exclaimed the girl, shaking her head at him. "To think that you've joined the Philistines! and yet"—the blue

eyes sparkled with enthusiasm — “I think I’ll like you better because you’re not a mere — oh, papa, what do you call it? — a money grubber, who has no time for anything but stocks and dividends and ridiculous board meetings. Just think of having a live journalist, a *vox populi*, to tell us everything about everybody! And I’m dying to hear about Mr. Irkins, that dreadful pasteboard dragon who frightens papa. There now!” — putting her dimpled white hands over the old man’s mouth — “you know he frightens you, and you mustn’t deny it. You see” — turning to Hugh, who looked embarrassed — papa gets rich by keeping secrets and Mr. Irkins gets rich by destroying them.”

“That’s it,” nodded Mr. Remington. “His spies are everywhere. A man can’t organize an enterprise —”

“Or steal a purse,” chirruped Miss Remington.

“Fanny!”

“I’m quoting Mr. Irkins, papa.”

“Or lay any business plans —”

“To cheat his neighbor — Irkins again, papa.”

"Really, my dear," growled the banker, noticing Hugh's smile, "this is not a joking matter. Nothing is holy, Mr. Dorsay, to that prying hypocrite, not even the most sacred matters of the business community."

"Dear me," exclaimed the girl, raising her eyebrows and gathering her dainty lips into a mocking *moue*, "how fearful! It makes one's blood run cold. Even a woman wouldn't dare to peep into such awful matters. I don't see how we can sleep at night with Mr. Irkins and his trained basilisks prowling through the streets. But you shan't say anything more to make Mr. Dorsay feel uncomfortable." Hugh was squirming uneasily in his seat. "We're not a bit afraid of you and your Irkinsees and sunlight of publicity and rights of man; and we shall expect you on Friday, ready to tell us about the olden knights and how they killed the dragons, and papa shan't say another word about his dragon. Good night, papa; good night, Mr. Dorsay—don't forget Friday."

She tripped out of the room with the airy grace of a child, leaving a faint odor of roses in the air.

An hour later Hugh sat at his desk in the *Mail* office pouring his soul out on paper. He recounted the interview with Mr. Remington in a few simple words and repeated his bold prophecy of world-wide conquest for American trade. Then he told the story of a young English nobleman, the heir of centuries of wealth and social power, driven from his home by the pitiless invasion of American syndicates, and forced to wander in search of a living among strangers under an assumed name. It was the tale of his own strange fortunes, and he wrote with a passion born of self-pity. Hour after hour he wrought out the bitterness of his spirit in words, and he grew eloquent while the spell of his agony was upon him. He pictured the miseries of a man of aristocratic birth and gentle breeding suddenly called upon to humble himself to the raw social forces of a new country, and to hear the very men who had accomplished his downfall vaunt their sinister prowess in his face.

It was a powerful and moving story, instinct with tragic sentiment and convincing in its evident simplicity. He wrote the truth as it came

from his mind and heart, inspired by his sufferings. His blood ran lightning. All that could feel pain in him uttered itself. It was a threnody of real life, such an outburst of heartfelt lamentation as could only come from a soul that had tasted the dregs of misery.

When he handed his copy to the city editor that exalted person assumed an aspect of frozen astonishment.

"Mr. Dorsay," he said in a voice of deep melancholy, "do you think you are hired to write by the yard? There's — let me see — something like three and a half columns here. You'll have to chop it down to a column, with room for a spread heading. Just cut all the gooslum out of it and get down to the news — no guff, but plain, straightforward news."

"I've done my best, sir," said Hugh, wearily. "I've written it just as Mr. Irkins told me to, and I can't change it."

He was oppressed by a feeling of tired dizziness. The lights in the room seemed to change to green and to red, and then to green again. Curious black specks floated in the air. He saw

the little editor perk and frown, and he heard a sound as of rushing water. Voices of thunder muttered around him.

He staggered back to his desk and sat down, dazed and nerveless, with an exquisite consciousness of pain. His thin face was as white as death. He leaned his head on his hand and, through his half-closed eyes, saw Mr. Martin, at the next desk, suddenly look at him through a nimbus of tobacco smoke.

"Why, hello!" cried the veteran, with kindling eyes. "I thought you'd never get through. What makes you look so solemncholy? Has he" — with a jerk of his thumb toward the city editor — "been jumping on you? You mustn't mind him. He's just a drooling, drivelling, shad-bellied —"

"Mr. Martin!" roared the editor.

"Yes, sir," answered the old man, meekly, "I'll have my story ready in a minute." And he returned to his desk, from which point he winked mysteriously at Hugh and shook his head, in silent condemnation of the editorial tyrant.

For a long time Hugh sat brooding. He had emptied his heart of its passionate protest against the wretchedness of his new life, and the reaction deprived him of the power of consecutive thought.

Presently he was summoned to Mr. Irkins's room. As he went down the stairs he had a dim foreboding of disaster. Had he offended the proprietor by his bitter indictment? Was he to be dismissed? Well, he had had his say, and if the end had come, he would face it like a true Englishman.

Hardly had he opened the door of the little office when Mr. Irkins bounded forward, waving his manuscript in the air, the brown eyes blazing with excitement and the bony face quivering.

"It's great! great!" he shouted. "You've written the story of the year. It'll stir the whole country, sir. You have the imagination of a Milton, Mr. Dorsay. Marvellous! I had no idea you had such quality in you. Your description of that titled nincompoop will tickle the pride of the people. It's just what they

need to make them realize the splendid progress of American — ”

The young man reeled, and threw his hands out before him.

“ Here, quick ! — some one ! — help ! ” shrieked the master of the *Mail*.

Hugh had fainted, and the heir of the crusaders lay in a pitiful heap at Mr. Irkins’s feet.

CHAPTER IV

THE next day Hugh gathered up his possessions, went to New Rochelle, and drove over the smooth country road to Mr. Martin's home, — a trim, green cottage, with rough stone foundations, and a red roof, standing in a grove of trees, and surrounded by a small garden of old-fashioned flowers, with quaint box hedges and all sorts of goodly, bitter-smelling bushes. The climbing roses over the little diamond-paned door, the scarlet beans creeping along the railing of the veranda, and the delicate confusion of pink and white and lavender in the pea-vines that trailed down from the sills of the dainty-curtained windows, gave an air of sweetness and cosey beauty to the place that appealed to the English-bred youth.

Hugh could never think afterwards of that quiet spot without calling up a vision of Helen Martin as he first saw her in the sunlit

garden, — a slim, sprite-like girl in a filmy white dress, lilac jacket, and jaunty straw hat, brown eyed, brown haired; a graceful, adorable, little child-woman, moving with light feet and smiling face, a shepherdess of roses — while the smoke of her father's pipe rose peacefully behind an open newspaper on the veranda.

As the dusty carriage stopped in the roadway, she came tripping to the gate, the blush of health in her dimpled cheeks and a sparkle of unconcealed happiness in her honest eyes.

"He's here, daddy," she cried, and Hugh thought he had never heard such a musical voice.

"Hurrah!" shouted the old journalist, throwing down his newspaper and running bareheaded through the garden, his kindly face glowing with excitement. "Welcome, sir; this is my little girl, Helen — Mr. Dorsay, my dear."

Hugh jumped to the ground and took the small, sun-browned hand that was offered so frankly. The touch gave him an exquisite sense of pleasure.

"We've been waiting for you, oh, ever so

long," she said, and then she cast her eyes down shyly.

"Yes, sir, and I've been reading that thumping fine article of yours in the *Mail*," said Mr. Martin, "and it's a wonder — best thing I've seen in years. It'll make your reputation. But, come, it's too hot out here in the sun, and we must get your things into the house. Here" — to the driver of the carriage, — "just hand down that — Why, what on earth —"

"It's my bath-tub," said Hugh, as the pea-green tin clanked on the ground.

"You don't mean to tell me that you brought it all the way from England?"

"Why, of course."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Helen, "you Englishmen must have a flattering opinion of other people, if you think it necessary to carry your bath-tubs around the world with you. You'll find a porcelain bath here. Mary" — a neat maid, in a white apron, appeared — "you can put that in the summer-house; it will do for my goldfish."

And while the maid carried the bath-tub away

on her head and the driver removed the big leather trunk from the carriage, Hugh and his host walked to the house, with Helen flitting before them, her sweet young face crimsoned at the memory of her jest.

“She’s the dearest little woman in the world,” said the old man, as he watched the airy figure, “and she’s as full of fun as a kitten — that way all the time unless — well, unless you just stir her up, and then she has the nerve of a man. You wouldn’t think it to look at her, but she’s been through college, and it hasn’t left a scar on her. It makes prigs or blue-stockings out of most girls,” he added, noticing the young man’s look of surprise, “but she hasn’t a twist in her — just as straight and simple and good-hearted as God made her, and American to the core. I want you to know her because” — his voice grew husky — “I wish I had known some pure young creature like that when I was your age. I might have been a different man — that is, before I was married.”

Hugh was silent. In spite of the genuine welcome which his new friends had given him,

he felt the instinctive shrinking of an Englishman in the presence of sudden familiarity, for your true-blue Briton makes friends slowly and resents the demonstrative stranger, being schooled to suspicion in all things social; and it may be that this intrained coldness of Englishmen to the warm-hearted and effusive people of America has done more to breed bad blood and uncharitableness between the two nations than all other causes combined.

In vain the feastings and resounding professions of international friendship, over the charmed cup, if the blood-brotherhood which men swear at night, when they are drunk, is repudiated in the morning, when they are sober, and John stares at Jonathan distantly through his single eyeglass, haughtily formal and suspicious. "Mamma," whispers the daughter of the travelling British matron, "those charming American ladies at our table act as if they would like to know us." "Then you may be quite sure," answers the careful mother, "that they are people we do not want to know." Who among you is there, O you Europe-wandering sons and daughters of the

western world ! that has not secretly repented the too easily outstretched hand, and inwardly raged over the unmerited British snub ?

The heir of the Castlehursts, with eight hundred years of family pride and prejudice behind him, found it hard to restrain the tidal influences of his blood. Who were these people who opened their doors and hearts so readily to a stranger without credentials ? Why should he be made the recipient of tender domestic confidences from a man he had not even heard of a week ago ?

“ You see,” said Mr. Martin, as though he had divined his guest’s thoughts, “ I’ve taken an old man’s liking to you because you’re just about as old as my boy would have been if he had lived, and somehow I think he’d have looked like you ; and ” — he patted Hugh’s shoulder gently — “ I want to keep you away from the sharks that have eaten up the souls of most of the young fellows I’ve known in the newspaper offices. That’s why I wanted you to come out here in God’s own green woods, where you can get a breath of pure air and hear the birds sing-

ing, and remember once in a while that the world isn't half so bad as life in the *Mail* office will make you think it is."

As he entered the cottage and glanced about the little sitting-room, Hugh experienced a peculiar sensation of peace. The graceful old mahogany sofa, the carved colonial chairs, the claw-footed table, with its lace cover and big Bible; the polished yellow brasses in the fireplace, the ancient blue plates on the wall, the portraits of Washington and Jefferson; the primitive colored picture of the surrender of Cornwallis; the hanging clock, with its representation of the battle of the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*, painted on glass, and the hundred other evidences of a home not made in one generation — instinct with patriotism and domestic love — how different it all was from the oppressive magnificence of the Remington residence!

The quiet charm of the house grew on him, when he saw the cool dining room, with its tawny rafters of hewn oak, its curious china cupboards, and well-worn sideboard of mellow satinwood; and the bedroom that was to be his, tricked out

in dainty chintz hangings, with white ruffles finishing off the four-posted bed; a little mahogany clothes-press, a bulgy old set of drawers, with a small swinging mirror on top; a portrait of Martha Washington, a deep chair filled with pine-stuffed cushions that scented the air, and a full book-case.

"It's all very simple here," said Mr. Martin, when they returned to the sitting room, "but we live comfortably and within our means."

"It's the most charming house I've seen in America," said Hugh, heartily.

"You don't call New York American?" grumbled the old man, pressing a wad of tobacco into the bowl of his meerschaum pipe. "New York's a foreign city, an international metropolis — there's little of the original American blood in her. No, sir, when you want to know what the real American is like, you must get out in the country among plain folk. You'll never find out among the millionnaires or in the tenements, where people are packed together like cattle. New York — bah!"

He lit a match and puffed at his pipe. Helen whisked into the room with an armful of roses.

"Now, daddy," she exclaimed, with a dainty nod, "I won't have tobacco smoke in this room!"

"Didn't think you'd catch me at it," said Mr. Martin, laughing and shaking his head. "I'll take Mr. Dorsay down to the rocks where we can smoke in peace. You can join us there, puss."

"And this," said the girl, holding up Hugh's silk top hat with an air of comic solemnity, "is this majestic object to be carried in procession or will Mr. Dorsay wear it?"

"I'll wear a straw hat," said Hugh, promptly surrendering, "that is, if—"

"Daddy will lend you one."

"Never saw such a girl," muttered Mr. Martin, with a look of pride, as he thrust an immense hat of plaited grass on his guest's head. "She's just like that all the time—orders men about like a—well, just like a dear little American girl. I suppose they're all the same; it's the way they're brought up—and a mighty good way, too."

A few minutes' walk, over a path through the fragrant woods, brought the two men to the rocky shore of Long Island Sound, and they seated themselves on a huge, moss-grown ledge, thrown

up by some volcanic upheaval, the sea plashing gently among the slimy boulders and dull weeds below, and the sparkling salt flood stretching away to the timbered shores and gray cliffs of Long Island.

It was a scene of rare beauty. The sun wheeled resplendent in a cloudless sky, and a gentle breeze stirred the green branches that shaded the flower-sprinkled turf rolling back from the dark tumult of rocks. White sails drifted with the tide, and far out at sea to the left, the smoke of an invisible steamship trailed along the horizon. Somewhere in the shadowy woods an oriole sang to its mate. The air was electric with life.

"Pretty good out here, isn't it?" observed the veteran, taking a deep breath of the fresh sea-air.

"It reminds me of the English coast."

"I suppose the world's pretty good everywhere — when you get away from men," mused the old man. "Men seem to spoil everything. Now these trees — see how substantial they look. That one, the big oak, was here when my grandfather was alive, and I suppose it'll be here when

my grandson is born — that is, if I ever have a grandson.”

“I hope so, I’m sure,” remarked Hugh.

“Eh? What? Well,” — Mr. Martin puffed hard at his pipe, — “I suppose my girl will leave me some day.” Hugh had a sudden heart-thrill. “She’s all I have left, but it’s the way of the world. Grandson — ha! ha! — that’s looking a long way ahead.”

A pair of yellow butterflies fluttered around the venerable head. Mr. Martin blew a whiff of smoke at them.

“That was a great article in the *Mail*,” he said, changing the subject. “It’ll do more for you than all the letters of introduction in the world. It made Helen cry,” — Hugh’s heart stirred again, — “but you mustn’t let on I told you. She’d take my head off. Of course that story about the English nobleman was all imagination.”

“No, it’s quite true.”

“Oh, come now, my son, I wasn’t born yesterday,” said Mr. Martin, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes. “That’ll do for the great American

people—God bless them!—but you mustn't try to bamboozle an old stager like me."

"It's absolutely true," protested Hugh, with an embarrassed smile.

"You mean to tell me that there's a titled Englishman floating around New York in disguise and hunting a living?"

"I do, indeed."

"Well, for heaven's sake, if he's suffering for friends, bring him up here; we'll find a corner for him."

"I'm keeping his secret."

"Well, I can see his finish," said the old man, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and feeling in his pocket for his tobacco pouch. "He'll hang around for a while with his ideas of self-made manhood, and then he'll sneak home again, or he'll declare himself and marry some millionaire's daughter."

"I think not," said Hugh, calmly. "This chap has made his mind up to stay in America and work up as high as he can."

"He ought to marry some clever American girl," suggested Mr. Martin. "She'd knock

some of the aristocratic nonsense out of his head and spur him up. There's nothing like an American wife to simply drag a man to the top — she's bound to take the lead if he doesn't."

"Maybe he will marry an American girl — if she'll take him as he is."

"Of course," continued the old man, "there are some American girls who wouldn't marry a foreigner. Now there's my Helen. She's opposed to international marriages."

"But you don't call an Englishman a foreigner? — that is, I mean, in that sense."

"And why not?" cried a sweet voice, as Helen fluttered forth from the bushes behind them and sat down beside her father, a fold of her dress sweeping against Hugh's feet.

"We were speaking of international marriages," explained the young man, reddening.

"Exactly so," said Helen, brushing her brown tresses back from her dimpled face — he noticed for the first time the strangely beautiful taper of her fingers — "and you forget that a wife takes the nationality of her husband, that an

American girl who marries an Englishman becomes a subject of the British crown."

Mr. Martin shook with laughter.

"You're in for it now, my son," he wheezed, as the smoke got into his throat.

"Would that be such a dreadful fate?" Hugh spoke gravely.

"It all depends on the girl," said Helen, shading her eyes with her hands and looking out to sea. "If she loved her country she wouldn't forswear it. Imagine yourself renouncing your allegiance to Queen Victoria and swearing allegiance to the United States; yet that's just the sort of thing an Englishman asks an American girl to do when he proposes marriage."

"But if she loves him, surely a mere question of political opinion ought not to stand —"

"I think I know what you mean, Mr. Dorsey," said the girl, in a low tone, as she looked him straight in the eyes, her cheeks aflame and her brown eyes shining with intelligence. "An English girl may be trained to set her emotions against her conscience, to look upon her patriotic convictions as feminine impertinences to

be surrendered to the first stranger who knocks at her heart; but my grandfather, who commanded an American regiment in the war of 1812, and carried a British bullet in his shoulder to the day of his death, taught me to love my country and its free institutions better than anything else, except God — and daddy.” She stroked her father’s hand affectionately.

The thrill of earnestness in the girl’s voice and the look of exaltation in her face warned Hugh that he was treading on sacred ground. She was so slight, so tenderly fair, so divinely childlike — and yet she revealed a depth of feeling that astonished him. He found himself comparing her to the girls he had known in England, haughty and opinionless, or gushingly sentimental, trained to shrink from knowledge of public matters, and to hear the views of male society with elegant indifference or simpering enthusiasm; leaving the unbecoming discussions of politics to wrinkled dowagers and beautiful spinsters. But here was a fresh young creature uttering her patriotic love with a simplicity and artless eloquence that shamed his own apathy,

a face beautiful with the light of an enfranchised soul. His heart leaped to her, and his pulse danced as he caught a breath of the sweet peas fastened in her belt. The sky seemed to grow bluer, and the glory of the sun on the water entered his being.

“But we mustn’t talk about such things now,” she said, rising to her feet and letting the breeze blow her white dress into graceful curves around her bewitching little figure. “I’m saving you up for another time, Mr. Dorsay. See how the tide runs against the rocks over there. It’s so exciting to see the water boiling into spray, and” — she glanced roguishly at Hugh — “it’s the same water that has washed the shores of merry England, where the tin bath-tubs come from — the English sea, the French sea, the German sea, the American sea — come, Mr. Dorsay.”

Hugh rose, offering his hand, and she leaned shyly on him as they made their way with mincing, careful steps along the spray-drenched rock to a jutting crag, covered with pale barnacles and jade-green seaweeds, where the tide swirled madly and threw up jewelled fountains

in the sunlight. Mr. Martin smoked thoughtfully and watched the youthful figures standing out against the sky. The sight seemed to please him, and he smiled and blinked. The world was pleasant to look at this summer day.

The breeze blew fresher and the curling waves heaved and hissed against the rock, receding with a hoarse, sucking noise, only to return with increased fury. The spray leaped higher and higher. A great white steam yacht moved out toward the open sea.

"That's the *Invincible*," said Helen. "She belonged to Mr. Stewart, the greatest millionaire in the world, who died last month."

She turned toward her father, poised on the edge of the crag, like some fair spirit of the summer. "Daddy, doesn't it make you feel envious to see that splendid yacht?"

"No," cried the old man, removing the pipe from his lips and stretching his limbs out comfortably; "no, I can't say that it does. I'd rather be a poor newspaper man and be alive, than be the richest man in the world and be dead."

Hugh fumbled unconsciously in his pocket for his single eyeglass and, finding it, set it against his eye, out of sheer habit.

"Dear me," said Helen, with a pretty air of surprise, "how distinguished and foreign we look!"

Hugh straightened his narrow shoulders. He was determined to take no notice of her remark.

"It must be hard to keep a little thing like that in place," she continued. "Just think of the horrid wrinkles it makes."

He turned his face toward her, and the rays of the sun reflected in the monocle struck her eyes with blinding fierceness.

"Why, you look like some dragon—"

Her foot slipped on the moist rock, and with a little cry of terror she plunged forward into the foaming water, striking her head on the lower spur of the ledge. A white wave dashed her body forward against the cruel shore and then drew her out into the swift tide, in which she sank, turning her face upward as she disappeared.

Mr. Martin uttered a cry of horror and struggled to his feet.

“My little girl!” he shrieked, as he bounded toward the edge of the rock. “My darling! my heart’s blood!”

For a moment Hugh stood foolishly looking at the white face and the slim form receding in the heavy water. The old man’s voice roused him, and, without hesitating, he leaped into the sea and struck out boldly. A wave flung him against the rock and cut his head, but he swam with all his strength, and catching a gleam of the trailing white dress in the depths, he dived toward it. Failing to reach the girl, he rose to the surface and looked about. An instant later he saw her body rising a few feet away. Several strong strokes brought him to her; and he placed his left arm around her small waist, her head falling helplessly on his shoulder, her sweet face touching his, and her brown hair clinging about his neck.

Like most Englishmen, Hugh was an expert swimmer, but his clothes were saturated and his feet were tangled in the skirts of the unconscious girl. He swam with his right arm and lowered his lovely burden to ease the strain, summoning up all his strength and will as he heard Mr.

Martin's shouts of encouragement. The wind was blowing hard and the waves grew larger. A swishing swell carried him against a sharp reef, and the undercurrent drew him under with a horrible gurgling sound. He fought for life with desperate energy, but his feet were hampered by the folds of the dress, and although he managed to reach the surface of the water again, he felt weak. Strange fiery sparks flashed before his eyes, and a thousand voices seemed to call him downward. There was an intense pain in his arm, where he had struck the reef. He could see the green tree-tops of the shore, as the sea swept him on, and the white gulls skimming lazily over the water. He looked at the dear little face resting so quietly on his shoulder, the long eyelashes wet and the tender lips apart. His youth cried for life, but his strength was gone. Suddenly he felt her arm about his neck. "Dear daddy," she murmured sleepily. Then a sudden darkness came, and as he ceased struggling, he heard loud cries and the thumping of oars.

The fisherman's boat arrived just in time. A grizzled oarsman dragged the languid bodies out

of the water and laid them, still clasped together, in the oozy bottom of his little craft.

“Well, I’ll be durned ef it ain’t old Martin’s purty darter!” he exclaimed. “Here, boy,” — to a ragged urchin who sat in the stern of the boat, with a look of horror in his freckled face, — “gimme that pail o’ water an’ be dum quick.”

He dashed the water in Helen’s face, and raising her head on his knees, rubbed her hands and temples vigorously.

“Never you mind this here,” he roared to his frightened assistant. “Jest get hold o’ them oars and pull fer th’ beach like th’ devil wuz after you. Poor little maidy, poor little beauty.” A tear rolled down his brown face as he stroked the small hands.

Helen stirred and moaned. “Daddy, daddy, dear daddy,” she whispered.

“Dear little missy,” said the rough boatman, caressingly, lifting the frail figure in his arms and seating her against the side of the boat.

Helen opened her eyes and shuddered. Seeing Hugh’s prostrate form in the bottom of the boat, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

The youth lay on his back, one arm thrown across his breast and his eyes closed.

"Thar, thar," — the boatman put his arm around her, — "'s all right now — snooked you outen th' water jest 'n time."

Opening her eyes again she started up and fell fainting across her young saviour.

"Now, now, little one," muttered the man, lifting her light body in his arms, "don't worry 'bout him. He'll keep. Nuthin' th' matter with him, on'y jest his breath's giv' out. He'll be kickin' 'round right 'nough in a couple o' minutes."

"Is he —" she gasped, rousing herself.

"He's jest es live es you be," answered the boatman. "Kinder tired out. See thar, now."

Hugh moved his hand and groaned.

"He made a spunky fight for you, little one."

Helen knelt beside the white face and kissed the damp brow. For a moment her cheeks flushed. A faint smile came into the boyish face. Hugh stretched his hands out, shivered, and uttered a little cry of suffering.

The boat heaved in the surf and grated on the gravelly shore. A group of men ran down to

meet it, and in the midst of them was Helen's father, bareheaded and panting.

"Oh, thank God, my child!" he cried as he clasped the pale girl to his breast and kissed her tenderly. "Thank God for all His mercies, my dear one."

Hugh was carried out of the boat and laid on a grassy knoll under a wide-spreading maple. Mr. Martin bent over him. The youth's face was pale and drawn, but there was a look of resolution in the fine, thin features. The monocle was still held in place against the right eye, giving the countenance a curious touch of hauteur.

"By gum, thet thar's a game 'un," said the boatman. "Never let go his peep-glass. Must hev' bull-terrier strain in him."

"He's an Englishman," said Mr. Martin.

"Them thar Britishers hev' thar good pints, I'll admit. They got spunk, sir; by gum! they got spunk."

"And now, Tom Kitcher," said Mr. Martin, "I feel that I owe my daughter's life to you."

"No, siree," protested the boatman, "it's him thet did't," jerking his thumb toward Hugh;

"hung on t' th' finish." He shook his grizzled head. "Greater love heth no man then this, thet a man lay down his life fer his friend — thet's Scriptur'. But, 'scuse me, Mr. Martin, ef I'm takin' liberties ; mebbe they wusn't friends."

The old journalist drew his daughter's head down on his broad breast.

"I hope they'll be friends," he said soberly. Then father and daughter knelt in the grass beside the exile.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Hugh awoke he found himself lying between scented sheets in the little bedroom of Mr. Martin's cottage. His head throbbed with pain, and his mouth was dry. A tall, thin young woman, with intensely black eyes, stood beside the bed waving a palm-leaf fan over him. She was dressed in a loose, gray gown, and a green crystal heart hung from her lean neck on a slender gold chain.

"What has happened?" he asked faintly.

"'Ssh," whispered the young woman. "You came near drowning. Your head was hurt, and you've had some fever." There was a peculiar purring softness in her voice. "You mustn't talk; the doctor has forbidden it."

The room seemed to spin around. Through the window he could see the summer sky. A great scarlet butterfly hovered in the casement and then darted away. From the spotless canopy of the four-posted bed a Dresden china cupid

swung on a cord, its arrow aimed at his head. The smell of honeysuckles made the air heavy. Hugh blinked at the young woman, wondering why she was there. Her snapping black eyes fascinated him. He gazed at her in silence.

"I'm Miss Grush of the *Mail*," she purred, looking intently at him and laying her strong, warm hand on his forehead with a stroking motion.

"Miss —"

"Miss Grush," she went on. "No, you needn't think; you never set eyes on me until this minute. I used to be a trained nurse, and Mr. Irkins asked me to take care of you when he heard of your accident—Mr. Irkins, the owner of the *Mail*, you know. There, now," — the purring sound made him sleepy, — "just shut your eyes—so, so, so;" she drew the tips of her fingers across his eyelids. "Don't resist, but try to go to sleep."

He opened his eyes again, and the power of her glance sent little electric waves through his body. Her brows were knit, and there was a weird expression of concentration and authority in her dark, oriental face.

"I can hypnotize you if you'll let me," she whispered, bringing her black eyes close to his. "You are blue-eyed and blond—just the pale complexion for a subject. It'll take away the pain and give you rest. So, so, so,—they do it in the French hospitals,—so, so,"—stroking his forehead slowly and making her voice drowsy.

He resisted the magnetic influence that was stealing through him, and a sudden rush of memory brought to his mind the struggle for life in the sea.

"Miss Martin?" he groaned, "is she—"

"Safe and sound," answered Miss Grush. "She'll be here presently, but you really mustn't speak; I'll do the talking."

With a noiseless, catlike tread she crossed the room and brought a cool drink, which she held to his greedy lips. Then she waved the fan over him. There was an interval of silence. Their eyes met.

"You've been talking a good deal in your fever," she said with a mysterious smile.

Hugh avoided her eyes. They troubled him.

Miss Grush uttered a soft, mirthless laugh, and tapped him playfully with the fan.

"You're a thoroughbred," she remarked.

At that moment a gentle step and the rustle of a skirt announced Helen. She came into the room all light and sweetness, with a look of affection and pity in her wan face. A white band wound about her little head gave a touch of meekness to her beauty. She seemed so slight, so airy, so fashioned for love, as she stood for a moment poised on tiptoe, with a red rose in her hand.

"I'll leave you alone with your hero," purred Miss Grush, gliding out of the room and pausing for an instant at the door to watch Hugh out of the tail of her eye.

That was a week of transcendent peace and happiness for Hugh. Under the influence of Helen's gentle ministrations his recovery was swift. She told him stories, read to him, and insisted on serving his food. Mr. Martin occasionally sat by his bedside, and regaled him with shrewd discourses on men and things. The

kindly old journalist was a sort of human library. He knew all the famous men, the politicians, the writers, the financiers, the actors, the musicians, the artists, the athletes, the clergymen; and his tales of news-hunting for the *Mail* in the highways and byways of New York were colored with a quaint, good-natured philosophy that made the young man love him. His honest face would kindle with humor as he talked about the proprietor of the *Mail*.

“Irkins is a wonderful creature,” he would say. “He’s honest enough, but when a moral impulse gets hold of him he wants to stand on the roof-top and call attention to it. He lives and thinks and has his emotions in full sight of the public,—like St. Simon, a dirty Syrian monk, who lived for nigh fifty years on top of a pillar, so that everybody could see how holy he was. When the circulation of the *Mail* increases he considers it a public endorsement,—although the extra sales may be caused by a prize fight or a divorce scandal,—and writes solemn editorials, consecrating himself to the sacred cause of the people.”

And now Helen would trip into the room and drive the old man away, and Miss Grush would purr insinuatingly as she readjusted the bandage on the patient's head. If the black-eyed nurse had penetrated the secret of Hugh's title, she gave him no hint of it, and although he tried by guarded sallies to discover what he had said in his delirium, she evaded his covert questionings and smiled. In spite of the hawkly sharpness of her eyes and the indefinable atmosphere of secrecy and mysticism which she carried with her in her silent glidings, he felt a thrill of physical pleasure, mingled with a nameless dread, when she touched him with her big, warm hands. There was an unspoken familiarity in her attitude which disturbed and puzzled him. And if he had seen her eyes glitter as she read and reread his story of the exiled English nobleman in the seclusion of her chamber, and had heard her shrill laughter, his mind might have been even more unquiet; for Miss Grush had heard enough in his ravings of home to explain the passionate and despairing article in the *Mail*.

Then Helen would sit beside him and perk

her dear little brown head, as she talked of everything under the sun; now picking a flower to pieces and explaining its structure, now saucily arraigning the British Empire for its wars of conquest, now glorifying the simple history of her own country, and now analyzing a complicated stitch of needlework.

“Ah, but you seem to forget that your country and mine have the same history,” he would say, when the little patriot pressed him too hard.

“The same history?” The dimples in her cheeks would come and go. “Your history is our history, but our history isn’t your history, you wicked monarchist. Up to the war for Independence our history was the same, but since then we’ve been making history for ourselves. We can claim Alfred and Cromwell and Hampden, but we can also boast of Washington, who was greater than them all, and Jefferson and Jackson and Grant and Lincoln. Now you know that you’d like to claim Lincoln as your countryman, wouldn’t you?”

“I know some one else — some one who isn’t dead and isn’t even a statesman — whom I’d

like to claim as a compatriot," and his blue eyes would dwell tenderly on her.

"Pooh! That's the way with the benighted Briton; always the *argumentum ad hominem*. When you're beaten, you become personal. Now, sir, I'll call Miss Grush, and you shall have a double dose of medicine as a penalty."

And when at last he was strong enough to venture out-of-doors, Helen accompanied him in many a pleasing ramble through the fragrant, shadowy woods, and he leaned on her arm and listened to her sweet voice and thanked God humbly for her companionship.

She was so arch, so feminine, so full of youthful grace and loveliness, and yet so perfectly balanced, so shrewd and frank. Her knowledge and cultivation amazed the young aristocrat, accustomed to the governess-made misses of England. She seemed to be unconscious of her learning, and talked of matters that taxed even his university training with the artless candor of a child.

Hugh's education had given him the conventional male British view of women, so well con-

fessed by Lord Chesterfield: "Women are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four and twenty hours together. . . . A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humors and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters; though he often makes them believe that he does both, which is the thing in the world that they are proud of." And Hugh, looking down from this height upon the milk and roses of insular womankind, had easily adopted an inward attitude of chivalrous condescension toward all the daughters of Eve. They were to be petted and flattered and amused and flirted with and protected—and they were even to be respected, sometimes, for their goodness and charity—but it never occurred to his exalted mind that a woman could be his equal in the large matters of life. It is true that the horizon of his experience had been narrow. His knowl-

edge of womanhood had been confined to a few demure maidens in his native county, who made soft eyes at him and giggled prodigiously over his profound sayings; the stiff matrons who frowned upon the escapades of his adolescence, and sat with such forbidding dignity in the dining-hall of Battlecragie Castle; and the frivolous, flirting, fiddle-faddling, shallow creatures of London's social vortex. Then, of course, there was Mademoiselle Ballafanti, of the Covent Garden ballet, divinely ordained for glorious midnight suppers, but utterly without heart or reason. There was one woman for whose mental acuteness he had an awful respect, a shrivelled, sour-faced countess, who would have married her only daughter to an unspeakable South African millionaire had not the gentle victim died before the willing Right Reverend could pronounce the mystic syllables that can unite hell and heaven ransomlessly on earth — a social tyrant before whose terrible tongue even his stern grandfather trembled. But of maidenhood adorably poised between fearless intelligence and feminine modesty he was totally ignorant. And

thus the soul of a continent was partly revealed to him in the companion of his walks. He began to understand the land in which woman has reached her own estate.

Needless to say, Miss Grush returned to New York when Hugh was able to walk about.

"She's a remarkable woman," said Helen one day when they were sitting under the shade of a huge oak. "She has dabbled in all kinds of oriental mysteries. Although she has been very kind to me, I confess that I'm afraid of her. She has such strange eyes. Every time she looks at me in that mysterious way I feel as if I had done something wrong. No one knows where she comes from or who she is. She knows all about theosophy and Christian science, and all sorts of occult things."

"A new woman," suggested Hugh.

"In a way, yes; but it's unfair to the new woman to suppose that she's always like Miss Grush. The new woman in America is simply the woman who believes that she has as good a right to aspire to a career in any of the trades

and professions as a man, and who sets out to claim her right."

"And you — do you like the new woman?"

"Well, I don't dislike her. It's all a matter of taste. Personally, I prefer the idea of the old-fashioned woman; I'm just selfish enough to love the sheltered position which the world gives me because I'm not a man. I don't want to earn my living if daddy is willing to earn it for me, and — well, I'm not sorry I was born a girl; I suppose it's because I was lucky enough to be born in America."

"But think of the social possibilities of an English girl — the ancient titles, the marvellously organized leisure class, the brilliant ceremonies, the romantic conditions, the social system reaching to the throne itself!"

"Dear me," said Helen, opening her brown eyes in mock wonder, "how enticing it sounds! But do you really think, — now be honest, — that any girl in the world could be half as happy with a title as she would be with the privileges of an American girl? — I mean really happy."

"I don't know," said the young Englishman,

musingly. "I've an idea that all women love aristocracy deep down in their hearts. They are too fastidious to admire the unclean mob. Democracy may be a fine thing in its way, but it's not beautiful, and its manners are vile. Somehow I feel that although a woman may see something sentimental in democracy, she is all the time secretly shrinking from its rudeness and longing for the graceful and ornamental — really I do."

"And I believe," said Helen, quietly, "that the Queen of England herself would not object to changing places with an American girl if she knew what it was to live among men who ask nothing for themselves which they are not willing to grant to others."

"The right to vote, for instance."

"When the women of America want to vote, they will have the right to vote."

"By Jove, I believe it; I do indeed!" cried Hugh, enthusiastically. "They deserve anything they want. I wonder how the deuce it is we know so little about American girls in England — real American girls."

"Or American men," added Helen, earnestly.

"No, I think we understand the American man. If he were like the American woman —"

"You forget, Mr. Dorsay, that the American woman is the creature of conditions made by the American man; and I think that the men of my country are the dearest, noblest, kindest men in human history, a thousand times finer than the knights who used to fight in honor of the women they carefully locked up in their castles to keep them true."

That night the Martins had an old-time American dinner, with roast turkey, green corn, sweet potatoes, and scalloped oysters; and although Hugh ate corn on the cob with as much patience and grace as he could command, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise.

"It makes one feel like a horse when he's munching it," he explained, "but it has a delicious flavor. I shall never see a quadruped eating maize again without envy." Whereupon the three laughed until the tears came.

"Speaking of corn," said Mr. Martin, as he laid down his third cob, "I've an idea. The air's so cool to-night that I think we might have

a log fire and teach Mr. Dorsay how to pop corn; ever see it done?"

"No, but I should be delighted, I'm sure," said Hugh.

"Good, good!" exclaimed Helen, clapping her hands. "Your education is just beginning. And after you've popped corn, you shall eat corn mush and corn pone,—that's southern, you know—and corn fritters and—"

"Corned beef," said Mr. Martin.

"Now, daddy, do be serious!"

How the logs crackled and blazed on the broad brick hearth! How the red flames roared up the chimney! And, when a bed of glowing coals had been prepared, how the heat made one perspire! It was so delightful to watch the slim little beauty moving about the fireside while the scarlet lights danced through the misty web of her white dress and shone in her sparkling eyes. What jokes the old journalist cracked and what tales he told of corn-poppings and corn-roastings in earlier days! Then there was a huge jug of old cider—such cider!

Presently the trim maid brought the popper,—

a wire box on the end of a long stick, — and Helen shelled the corn into it, twisting the little cobs in her white hands, while Hugh held the handle of the popper.

There was a small handful of corn in the popper when Hugh held it over the coals. It barely covered the bottom of the wire box.

“Why not fill it up?” he asked.

“You just wait,” said Mr. Martin.

“I really don’t see much fun in this. It’s rather tame.”

Suddenly the corn began to explode. Hugh dropped the popper and leaped to his feet with an outcry of alarm. The old man shrieked with laughter. Hugh seized the handle again and held the corn over the fire, in spite of the contest that raged in the popper.

“It’s tremendously exciting,” he cried.

“Keep jiggling it or it’ll burn,” commanded Helen. “Oh, you’re spoiling it; I can smell it burning.” And Hugh knelt down and danced the popper over the coals till the perspiration streamed down his face and the snowy pop-corn, in one last startling volley of explosions, burst

open the top of the wire box and scattered over the floor.

"By George!" exclaimed the youth, excitedly, "it's like fighting a battle. It's ripping good fun."

When the pop-corn was heaped in a quaint yellow bowl, Helen buttered it and sprinkled pinches of salt here and there.

"It's awfully good," said Hugh, as he munched the savory kernels.

"There are many other American things you'll like, if you live here long enough," observed Mr. Martin. "The best side of this country is the simple and natural side. It's when Americans become ashamed of their national traits, when they try to imitate the things of other countries, that they go to pieces."

"I haven't been in America many days, but I've been conscious of a sort of ostracism," said Hugh. "The mere fact that I'm an Englishman seems to prevent men from associating with me."

"You shouldn't allow that to disturb you," cried Helen, twisting a cob and allowing the corn

to rattle into the popper. "Six hundred citizens of Athens could have a man banished for ten years by merely writing his name on an oyster shell and handing it in to the government. That was called ostracism. Yet that one man could ostracize every citizen of Athens by simply retiring from the city. Everything depends on how you look at such things."

"And how do you come to know so much about the Athenians?" asked the astonished youth.

"Oh, I haven't forgotten everything I learned at college," said the girl, and as she knelt before the fire and shook the popper over the shining coals, she recited in the Greek tongue the sonorous opening lines of the "Iliad," until the popping of the corn interrupted her voice.

"And now we'll string it," she said, emptying the popper into the bowl.

With needle and thread she made wonderful garlands of the pop-corn, winding them in dainty festoons about her father's chair until the old man protested, whereupon Hugh twisted several strands together, and tying them in a wreath, set

it upon her soft brown hair. She made a pretty figure as she stood there before the fire, crowned like some slender wood-nymph, and blushing at the compliment.

"Give us a song, Helen," said Mr. Martin; "something with a ring to it."

"Please do," urged Hugh. "I'd like to hear a real American song."

"Yes, a patriotic song — no French fal-lals — just a plain old-timer," exclaimed the veteran.

"'The Blue and the Gray,' " suggested Helen, removing her wreath.

"No, Mr. Dorsay wouldn't care for that. Give us something revolutionary."

"But he mightn't like the sentiment."

"Indeed, you can't hurt my feelings by singing about the American war for Independence," Hugh insisted. "We all know now what a terrible duffer George the Third was. He's the most unpopular king in English history. If he hadn't been crazy, I would be your countryman to-day."

In a sweet soprano voice Helen sang "The Sword of Bunker Hill." In spite of the primitive theatricalism of the simple ballad, Hugh was

profoundly moved by the patriotic earnestness of the singer. Love of country shone in her dear little face. She seemed to be inspired by his presence, and her voice trembled with emotion when she came to the last lines :—

“The son remains, the sword remains,
Its glory growing still ;
And eighty millions bless the sire
And sword of Bunker Hill.”

“There, my son,” said the old man, with a kindly smile, as the last note died away, “you don’t hear that song in the drawing-rooms of New York, nowadays. Our rich men are getting a little ashamed of the past, and Bunker Hill sentiment is too much associated with men who cared more about principles than property to stir the cockles of most millionnaires’ hearts. Well, well, I suppose the early Americans were pretty radical, and perhaps I’m a fool not to remember that all nations forget the past when they grow rich ; still, it’s a pity that the old spirit is dying out in some places. There’s no sentiment in money, my boy, and there’s no wisdom in money.”

"But surely you are overlooking the American millionnaires who have given such enormous sums for charity and education?" said Hugh.

Mr. Martin shook his head.

"They're old men who have grown rich by cruelty and injustice. They won't have pockets in their shrouds and they can't take their money out of the world with them. Here and there you find a man who has plundered the public all his life, trying to square accounts with the Almighty by dividing some of his booty with his victims; but you can't bribe God, my boy."

The old man stretched his arms out and yawned prodigiously.

"It's growing late," he said, "and you ought to have been in bed long ago."

Hugh arose to go, when Helen arrested him.

"Daddy and I always say our prayers together," she said. "Perhaps you'd like to say yours with us."

Hugh felt the blood mounting to his face. Years had passed since he had prayed outside of a church.

"I'd like to stay."

So they went to their knees and bowed their heads about the dying embers, and the old man uttered a prayer so simple, so beautiful, so full of childlike faith and love, that the stranger's soul was lifted up and there were tears in his eyes when he went to his room.

CHAPTER VI

DURING the first year of his busy life in the service of the *Mail*, Hugh received letters regularly from Mr. Chadder. Then his solicitor's communications became less frequent. The effort to conceal the young viscount's presence in New York had been difficult at first, for his grandfather had endeavored to trace his movements; but, as time passed, even the old Earl of Castlehurst seemed to abandon all interest in the whereabouts of his wilful heir.

In spite of Mr. Irkins's friendly interest in his career, Hugh found the struggle for life in a new country a bitter one. The headlong rush and nervous strain of newspaper work — to-day's effort counting for nothing to-morrow; the toiling by night and sleeping by day; the perpetual contact with extremes of life — now a glittering social pageant and now a brawling scene of crime, here a meeting of millionaire

trust directors and there a night ramble through the cabins of starving coal-miners; the desperate ingenuity used in interviewing unwilling victims of publicity; the daily glimpses of pride, hypocrisy, and cruelty; the trailing of loud-mouthed and lying politicians through hotel corridors; the dull, droning days in ill-smelling law courts; and always at night the fierce glare of electric lights in the *Mail* office; the grinding agony of writing in an atmosphere of hurry and confusion; the never ceasing cry of copy! copy! copy! the terrible periods when neither ideas nor words would come to the mind; the moral white-heat; the fury, the breathlessness, the delirium of the last few minutes before the paper went to press; and then the sudden silence and idleness when the movement of the revolving iron monsters made the building tremble; the yawning, the languid inspection of timepieces, the heart-depressing reaction when it was all over, — these experiences, repeated day after day and week after week, hardened him.

There was no lack of color or adventure in his life, but his impressions became blurred.

Events followed each other too swiftly, and one extraordinary scene or experience dulled the memory of another. There was no time for analysis or digestion, and he suffered moral dyspepsia. He was like a man on a treadmill, continually moving forward, but never arriving anywhere.

He still had a room in Mr. Martin's cottage, and occasionally he went out to it for the sake of seeing Helen, but the exacting discipline of his duties compelled him to sleep in the city most of the time, and he occupied a small apartment in the neighborhood of Gramercy Park, having his morning coffee, toast, and eggs served in bed, and taking the rest of his meals in the restaurant that happened to be nearest when he was hungry. This semi-vagabondage, its contact with many events and actual participation in none, its reversal of ordinary hours of work and rest, its tendency to produce acquaintances without friendships, its social isolation — breeding loneliness in the midst of multitudes — drove Hugh into close companionship with his fellows in the *Mail* office; and

many a night he sat in an "all-night restaurant" with a company of weary comrades long after the paper had gone to press, only to wake up in the morning with a headache and a realization that he must go through the nerve-racking routine again.

The keen competition of life in New York had aroused in him a fierce desire to succeed. He began to understand the busy, restless people of the metropolis, and to feel the quickening influences of democratic associations. The sense of helplessness and confusion which his first days in America had brought to him disappeared; confidence grew with experience. There was a sharper, shrewder look out of his eyes. He caught the most delicate meanings of the local vernacular; his sense of humor expanded in his nervous surroundings. He became more aggressive, and the weak lines about his mouth were replaced by an aspect of virile firmness. There was more color in his face, his figure was more robust, and he walked with a quicker tread.

Miss Grush had grown into his life strangely.

Ever since she nursed him in the Martin cottage, the black-eyed adventuress had assumed a mysterious attitude of intimate sympathy. She threw herself into his daily affairs, praised his work, prompted his impulses, haunted his hours of leisure, hovered about him when he was at work. Her dark, thin countenance smiled upon him, and her purring voice was forever at his ear. There was something curiously attractive about Miss Grush, notwithstanding her stealthy, feline temperament. She possessed an extraordinary power of attraction without sentiment, a subtle mental and physical mastery of others, and, although Hugh had seen her eyes momentarily flash into an expression of devil-like malice, he straightway forgot it when she looked at him softly and purred out some mysterious reference to the weakness of womankind.

The comings and goings of Miss Grush were as strange as her personality. She would disappear for two or three days at a time, and return in the company of some long-haired mysteriarch or silken-bearded Asiatic. She was a member of numerous psychological circles and a contributor

to the various periodicals devoted to occultism. She was a theosophist and had consorted with the fat and voluble Blavatsky, high priestess of mysticism; and when the white-haired hierophant of theosophy — successor of Blavatsky — wended his way from Madras to New York, it was Miss Grush who welcomed him on his arrival. She knew the yogis, the mahatmas, the adepts, the mediums. There was no corner of esotery, no recondite cult, into which she had not penetrated. She had seen and talked with Buddha in a midnight council of spiritualists; she had witnessed the arrival of an astral message from India, was present at the avatar of a Thibetan abbot who had been dead for a thousand years, and saw his soul enter the body of a child.

The history of this extraordinary young woman was unknown. It was said that the proprietor of the *Mail* was familiar with her antecedents, but Mr. Irkins had given no hint of his knowledge to his editors. At one time she had been a trained nurse and had studied hypnotism. It was this glimpse into the mysteries of the mesmeric trance that led her into the shadowy regions

of organized esoterism, and in time her fascinating articles on ghosthood and its corollaries won her a place on the staff of the *Mail*. Mr. Irkins believed that the public liked to read about "spookology," and he favored Miss Grush. And, although she pretended to believe in the mysteries she described, she was possessed of a mental sharpness compounded with cunning, that brought her successfully into the general work of news-gathering.

It was not difficult for such a woman to interest Hugh's frank and trustful nature. There was nothing in heaven or earth that she did not seem to know, and her very subtlety appealed to his blunt mind. She planned odd feasts in out-of-the-way Italian restaurants and introduced him to all sorts of mystics. He drank sour wine in obscure cellars, dined on sharks' fins in a Chinese inn, revelled in cheap French resorts, fared on beer and pigs' knuckles and wonderful krauts and wursts in picturesque German beer gardens, and laughed and sang with the priests and priestesses of every *ism* and *ology* under the sun. At times he was permitted to attend wonder-working *séances*

in dimly lighted rooms, and although he laughed wholesomely at the pretensions of the adepts and mediums, he found these adventures on the borderland of infinity interesting and sometimes entrancing.

Miss Grush was not beautiful. Her face was too lean, her lips too thin, her skin too yellow, and her eyes too close together. There were deep lines about the corners of the straight mouth, and the fine nostrils had an unpleasant trick of expanding. In moments of mental excitement there was an intense look in the black eyes and an impressive expression of concentration in the gypsy countenance. She had a rare power of arresting attention by suddenly lowering her voice to a whisper and dilating her eyes. But there was an indescribable hardness, a sly vigilance about her, that gave one a feeling of restlessness in her company.

There was no sentiment in Hugh's relations with this daughter of mysteries. She was simply a professional comrade who wove spells for his entertainment; a witty, witchlike, tactful vagrant who never failed in variety, and whose orbit of

weird follies reached from the spectacled psychologists of the great universities to the table-tipping fakirs of the cheap restaurants.

Little did the young man dream of the deep cunning that lay hidden behind those friendly black eyes, or of the confidential correspondence with a firm of London solicitors which had discovered to Miss Grush the secret of his rank and title. His wild ravings, while lying unconscious in the Martin cottage, coupled with his article in the *Mail*, had put her keen mind on guard, and the inquiries she sent to England were sufficient to identify Hugh as the missing Viscount Delaunay. And one day, finding his desk unlocked, she read a letter from his old solicitor.

"While I hope that your lordship does not contemplate a permanent residence in America," wrote Mr. Chadder, "I believe that your present experiences will be of lasting benefit to you. Contact with Americans must inevitably awaken a keener pride in your own country and bring out the latent qualities of your noble blood. It would serve no useful end to return to London now, for I will not attempt to conceal from you

the sometimes humiliating straits to which your lordship's distinguished grandfather is driven to satisfy creditors, and to live in the most modest way. The earl has secured an American tenant—a Mr. Swinton of Chicago—for Battlecragie Castle, and is now in small lodgings in Jermyn Street. He is greatly broken in health, and shows little interest in anything, except the commercial invasion of England by the Americans, and the mere mention of this subject is sufficient to provoke violent outbursts of anger. It would be a great blow to his pride to know that you were living in New York. He refused to attend the last levee at St. James Palace, when he read in the *Times* that her Majesty had bidden the American ambassador to dinner at Windsor, and declares that no Englishman who has a drop of patriotism in his veins will eat anything that comes from America; although the truth is that the beef he eats every day, and the flour from which his bread is made, were grown in the United States. I fear that, if he learns of your present life, he will never be reconciled to you. In spite of my sincere sympathy with your lord-

ship's manly effort to work out a career for yourself on your own merits,—which I am sure does credit to your intentions,—I must admit that it shocks me to think that the last man of a family which adorns the greatest pages of English history—and, particularly, your distinguished father's son—should be reduced to the necessity of winning his livelihood by reporting the doings of others. I am sure that your lordship will forgive me if I say again that a suitable American marriage would not be an unworthy object of your youth, and that it would solve a situation too painful to discuss in detail."

Miss Grush read the letter again and again before she replaced it in Hugh's desk. And from that day she increased her efforts to win his regard and establish her influence over him. She was too intelligent not to recognize the tender affection which had grown up between Hugh and Helen Martin. As yet it was an unspoken sentiment, too vague for words, a sweet comradeship, a fond concord, unconscious of passion. Notwithstanding her frank and self-reliant nature, the slightest approach to the secrets of Helen's heart discovered

a girlish shyness that defied investigation, while it heightened the charm of her innocent youth and beauty.

Try as he might, Hugh could never cross the barrier between them. He was an Englishman, a leal subject of the British crown, while she was the daughter of a nation that recognized no higher rank than the sovereignty of manhood. Her ancestry, her education, her environment, and her patriotic temperament combined to strengthen her national prejudice. With the egotism of youth — and what is there like the egotism of a young girl living in an atmosphere of homage, sweeping away resistance with the tidal power of beautiful maidenhood? — she clung to her first patriotic conceptions as settled convictions, and declared that no true American could ever become the subject of a king, by marriage or otherwise. And Hugh came to know the little patriot well enough to understand that an avowal of his rank and title would bring the intimacy of their companionship to an end; and so he guarded his secret and allowed himself to drift pleasantly with her, without a thought of the future.

All this was known to Miss Grush. She found many excuses to visit the little green cottage in the woods, and by playful allusions to Hugh surprised Helen into a blushing admission that the young Englishman's nationality had been the cause of some restraint in their intercourse; and by a hundred feminine devices of hint and insinuation, Miss Grush sought to widen the breach.

One night, after Hugh had finished a long article on the now furious agitation for American intervention in Cuba, and stood looking out of a window in the *Mail* office, watching the occasional drops of rain that trickled down the pane, Miss Grush touched his arm.

"Tired?" she asked, as he turned lazily.

"Yes, I'm fagged out," he yawned. "This Cuban business has stirred me up. It's horrible to think that Spain is allowed systematically to exterminate a brave little nation simply because the moneyed men of the United States are fearful that business might be disturbed and stocks depressed if the government interfered with the Spanish policy of massacre. It sickens

me to be told that a newspaper man has no right to allow his personal feelings or opinions to enter into his work."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Miss Grush, sympathetically. "I know how you feel. It's maddening."

"There's not a man on the staff that hasn't had his turn on the Cuban question, and yet not one of them cares a rap about it except to make a good story. Journalism seems to deaden a man's soul. Even Mr. Irkins told me to-night that he stuck to the insurgent cause because there was circulation for the *Mail* in it. And yet war may be declared before the week is out."

"A man's soul can't be deadened if he goes to the gate of life," purred Miss Grush, laying her warm hand on his shoulder and watching him through her half-closed lashes. "You laugh at the evidences of the spirit life that broods in the air about you, but I can take you to-night to one who will convince you."

"Pshaw!" he laughed wearily, shaking her hand off, "more sour wine, villanous cooking,

and spooks. I'm not in the humor for it to-night; it's like hearing the Lord's Prayer to a banjo accompaniment. I'm sure it's kind of you to think of me, but I'm in a serious mood and these ghost tricks are tiresome; you'll have to excuse me."

The dark face grew paler and the thin figure stiffened at the rebuff.

"You never think of me," she said bitterly.

"Oh, come now," said Hugh, moved by her tone, "you know better than that; but I'm beat out to-night and I'd rather turn in and have some sleep—really, I would." •

"Do come," she pleaded. "I have to go for the paper and I feel lonely; besides, there are to be manifestations by Madame Grocrot, the greatest medium in the world. Her house in Paris is the resort of the most famous writers and scientific men in Europe. She is a woman whose learning and social position are sufficient to obtain a serious hearing for her in any community, and the Society for Psychical Research has received her evidence almost without criticism."

Hugh stuck his hands in his pockets and flattened his nose against the window-pane. The rain was thicker in the air, and the Broadway pavements were already streaming.

"They're all humbugs," he said. "That Gerzmanowli woman told me that I would inherit a great fortune within a month, and then tried to borrow twenty-five dollars from me. Prince Chownda insisted that he could see a beautiful angel through my flesh, and afterward attempted to sell me a glass sapphire. The holy Lama — what-do-you-call-him? — assured me that he had not eaten for ten years, and left for parts unknown after running up an enormous bill at the Waldorf-Astoria restaurant. The spirit princess who insisted on kissing me at Mrs. Kemmer's ghost show had been drinking gin. The whole thing's a fraud, and it's the cruelest sort of imposition, because the victims are generally sorrowing women. I can't bear it. No, I'll go home to-night."

"Please come," she purred in his ear. "Do it for me. I've a reason for asking it."

"A reason?"

"Yes, a reason. I want to convince you to-night of truths that may affect your whole life. I can't tell you everything now, but I want you to trust me to-night."

"Oh, well," said Hugh, good-naturedly, "hang it! I suppose I must go. You never let up on a fellow till you've had your way."

"It will be the night of your life," whispered Miss Grush, with a strange smile.

An hour later they entered an old-fashioned and somewhat shabby brick house near Washington Square, and were ushered into a large, half-lighted room where twenty or thirty men and women were seated in a semicircle facing a tall Japanese screen. The room was plainly furnished, and there were a few commonplace steel engravings in cheap frames on the faded walls. A cracked marble mantel over a vacant fireplace was adorned with imitation bronze statuettes flanked by ground-glass vases filled with dried pampas grass. Two doors behind the screen were half concealed by gaudy Turkish hangings.

The people in the room spoke in whispers. Most of them were women. In the middle

of the semicircle sat an old man, whose white hair hung in curls down his back. Beside him, and evidently his companion, was a smooth-faced youth with a harelip, who stared about with an expression of awe. Two seats away was a curiously wizened man, with a bald pate and bulging forehead, whose ivory-handled walking-stick stood upright between his knees. He whispered incessantly to a sickly young woman dressed in widow's black and heavily veiled. Next to him was a huge, red-faced man with close-cropped side whiskers and a triple chin, who wheezed and goggled his eyes apoplectically when he was not listening to the little, thin woman who sat beside him.

As Miss Grush and her companion entered the room, Madame Grocrot, a tall, graceful woman, whose singularly strong face was marred by a great wart, came from behind the screen and welcomed them. She spoke with a slight foreign accent and was dressed in a prim black silk dress devoid of ornament. She greeted Miss Grush with marked deference and glanced sharply at Hugh.

"A friend of the cause?"

"A doubter," said Miss Grush. "One who seeks light."

"Ah, faith! faith! we are nothing without faith," sighed Madame Grocrot, raising her eyes to the ceiling. "We shut our eyes and say that the world is dark, but when we open them we perceive the light and beauty of heaven. We think of the flesh as the only reality, forgetting that it is merely a garment for the spirit. Ah, Miss Grush, if this seeker for light will only have faith to see, who can tell what blessed message may come forth to him from the spirits who surround us."

"Don't make a fool of me," whispered Hugh, angrily, to his guide.

"You have the face of a prophet," said the Madame, looking him in the eyes.

"Pooh!" answered Hugh, rudely.

"And you must have the faith of a prophet — the faith to see, to hear, to know. It is not given to every one to know the truth."

"When does the show begin?"

"The show? Ah, my dear Mr. —"

“Dorsay,” said Miss Grush.

“My good Mr. Dorsay, — the revelation, the sublime transmutation of disembodied soul ether into material forms, the meeting of infinite and finite — how can you speak so lightly of such sacred things?”

“I suppose it’s because I’ve seen so much humbug,” said Hugh, frankly. “Show me a spirit that I can recognize. Ghost voices and table rappings are easy enough.”

A swift signal passed between the eyes of Miss Grush and Madame Grocroft.

“You shall see and hear to-night what will be understood only by yourself,” said the medium, raising her glance to the ceiling again and clasping her hands as if in prayer. “I feel your psychic forces stirring; you are on the verge of a great event, a great awakening.”

Hugh sniffed contemptuously and took a seat with Miss Grush among the devotees, several of whom knew her and nodded their heads. Then Madame Grocroft rustled forward and disappeared behind the screen. There was silence for a few minutes, interrupted only by

the wheezing of the red-faced man and the ticking of a clock. The lights in the room were extinguished. Hugh stared into the darkness until he grew drowsy and nodded. The sharp tinkling of a bell aroused him, and he noticed a pearly radiance shining faintly behind the screen. The light grew brighter, changing from white to silvery blue, to rose-tinged gray, to violet, with tremulous flashes of pale green, and then to a misty glare of sulphurous yellow, which died down to a ghastly white flicker.

"Chemicals," whispered Hugh to Miss Grush. "She's burning alcohol mixed with salt now — I know the trick."

"For God's sake be serious!" she replied. "We are in the presence of the dead."

A tall figure robed in white stalked from behind the screen. At every step there was a clanking of metal and the jewelled hilt of a sword protruded through a slit in the trailing garment. A white cloth was twisted about the head, throwing a shadow on the face, over which there played a deathly phosphorescence. The robe was slightly parted below the square chin, revealing a massive

neck and the shining edge of a steel breastplate. The eyes were hidden beneath bushy eyebrows.

“Lord Delaunay,” said the figure, in a deep voice that echoed through the darkened room.

Hugh sat silent and motionless. His skin tingled and his head throbbed, but he clenched his teeth, resolved not to have his secret ravished from him.

“He’s looking at you,” whispered Miss Grush, nudging him.

The figure advanced toward Hugh with long, heavy strides, making the boards of the floor creak.

“Lord Delaunay!”

A long finger pointed at him from the white folds. The swathed head bowed, and there was a terrible grin on the dim visage.

“Speak, speak!” urged Miss Grush. He could feel her hand trembling as it touched him; but he gave no sign and uttered no word.

“Lord Delaunay!” The voice rolled harshly and ended in a wail. The figure moved onward until the white robe touched his knee.

“Hang it, you’ve stepped on my foot!” shouted Hugh, indignantly, as he leaped from his seat.

"Thou knowest me," groaned the apparition.

"I don't," snapped the young man.

"I am Godfrey de Bouillon, Marquis of Antwerp, Duke of Lorraine, Baron and Defender of the Holy Sepulchre. Thou art my kinsman."

"Nothing of the sort," said Hugh, in spite of his shaking knees. "Godfrey de Bouillon couldn't speak English."

"Alas! that one of my blood should renounce his name. Know, then, that the tongues of all men are known to those who have risen from the bondage of the flesh. Thou wast born in Battlecragie Castle and —"

"Nonsense! I was born in London."

The tall figure started and shrank backward. A bell tinkled, and the glow behind the screen died out. There was utter darkness. Hugh was conscious that the white figure was slowly retreating. Not a sound broke the stillness but the creaking of the floor. There was a sudden rush of blood to his head, and with a fierce bound forward he grappled the apparition. His wrists were seized with an iron grip, there was a piercing

scream, followed by the crash of the overturned screen. A powerful hand struck him on the forehead and he fell to the floor, while the room was filled with the cries of the frightened company. As he staggered to his feet, Hugh could hear men and women rushing to and fro in the darkness in a wild endeavor to escape. Then a warm hand was laid on his head, and Miss Grush's voice purred in his ear.

"Be cool," she said. "You've lost your head. Stand where you are."

Suddenly the lights were turned up. The screen was in its place again, the white figure was nowhere to be seen, and Madame Grocrot issued forth to survey the upset chairs and huddled groups with an air of surprise. Hugh rubbed the bump on his forehead and frowned. His face was white with passion. The tall medium raised her hands and clicked her tongue.

"T'ck, t'ck, t'ck! what does this mean?" she cried. "I have been roughly awakened from the trance. What brawler has done this?"

The red-faced man pointed to Hugh and wagged his fat head.

"He's a newspaper spy," he growled. "It'll all be in print to-morrow."

"Ah, Mr. Dorsay," said the Madame, reproachfully, "is it possible? Have you forgotten the laws of social intercourse so far as to violate the privacy of this circle?"

"Nothing is further from my mind," answered Hugh. "I'm sorry to have disturbed your meeting, but I insist upon seeing the man who struck me. There is a conspiracy here that must be explained. Where is the man who called himself Godfrey de Bouillon?"

Madame Grocroft smiled and closed her eyes dreamily.

"You speak of the great knight who conquered Jerusalem and rescued the Holy Sepulchre," she murmured. "He it was who spoke to me from the other world. Indeed you have been fortunate to speak with the illustrious spirit — so fortunate!" Her eyes remained closed and her face grew radiant. "I remember now — a tall man in shining armor, a long sword at his side, and a cross on his great shield."

"Let's go," said Hugh, dryly. "I've had

enough of this. No, thank you," — to Madame Grocroft, who begged him to sit again at the bright gate of truth — "not any more."

As he went out into the night with Miss Grush, the rain beat in his hot face. Neither spoke. He was dazed by the discovery that the secret of his identity was known in New York. He gave his arm mechanically to his silent companion and walked aimlessly toward Broadway. A squad of drunken roisterers went reeling past him in the storm, singing in chorus. He could hear their voices sounding along the street as they disappeared in the drifting grayness. He shivered and turned up the collar of his coat.

"What did he mean by calling you Lord Delaunay?" asked Miss Grush, clinging to his arm.

Hugh stopped abruptly and peered in her face, the bright drops falling between them.

"You are too sharp altogether," he said gruffly.

CHAPTER VII

THEY walked in silence through the storm for a few minutes. It was growing colder. The wind caught up little whirls of rain and rattled the shutters on the houses. At the corner of Broadway they halted under an electric light that made the shadows of the descending shower flutter over the gleaming street like flocks of frightened bats.

"Where are we going?" purred Miss Grush.

"Going?" Hugh stared at the dancing shadows. "Where should we be going?"

"It's early yet. We might find the Prince of Bpoonung at Podelli's. He generally drops in late for a dish of spaghetti; and some of the others are sure to be there — Bulga Toomi, Miss Cassatto, or Professor Frichkoff."

"No, I'm tired and I have a splitting headache. I've been terribly upset to-night. I'll go

home and turn in. I wish I hadn't gone to that ghost show and made a spectacle of myself."

"Won't you come to my apartment and talk it over?" she suggested with an eagerness that escaped his notice. "I feel that something has wounded you deeply, and perhaps I can help you to understand it."

Hugh hesitated.

"I oughtn't to have asked you to Madame Grocroft's to-night; but she is the most famous medium in the world, and I didn't want you to miss the opportunity of seeing her. I'm sure you're mistaken in supposing that the apparition was a trick. If I thought so, I'd — But you'll come with me and let me explain, won't you?"

There was something in her manner that aroused Hugh's interest. After all, what reason could she have for deceiving him? He could feel her black eyes looking into his very soul. The electric light struck green sparkles from the crystal heart hanging at her throat. Her hand trembled on his arm.

"If you really could explain —"

"I'm sure I can explain everything."

“Then I’ll go.”

And so it happened that the heir of Battlecragie Castle found himself near midnight seated in Miss Grush’s little sitting room, with a smoking Welsh rabbit and a bottle of ale before him.

It was an interesting place. The dull red walls; the colored Turkish hangings; the rows of photographs of oriental celebrities in picturesque costume; the canopy of embroidered silk held over a many-cushioned couch on the points of ancient halberds; the carved blackwood cabinet, filled with painted and gilded idols, Eastern daggers, bits of jade, rare snuff-bottles and all sorts of Chinese odds and ends; the green bronze dragon on the steam heater, emitting sandalwood incense through its nostrils; the big blackwood chair with a marble seat; the hanging placards covered with prayers and odes in Sanscrit and Chinese characters; and the altar-like framework in front of the piano, containing a portrait of the lamented Blavatsky, dead priestess of occultism, lent an air of mystery to the room that even the smell of burning cheese and the flavor of good ale could not dispel.

"It's a cosey little den," said Hugh, looking about him. "Just the place for a midnight supper. What strange things you must have seen here. I suppose every incantation known to the ghost-workers has been uttered in this room. Stunning good ale, too — just cold enough — and this rabbit's as tender as can be."

Hugh was recovering his spirits and laughed heartily at Miss Grush's stories.

"You may not believe it," she murmured, "but I've seen the soul of a cousin who died ten years ago sitting on that steam heater, beside the bronze dragon."

"Jolly uncomfortable place to sit, if the steam was on," said Hugh, sipping his ale. "Perhaps he got used to heat after he died."

"You don't believe me?"

"I'm like Walpole. I believe everything but history — it's a lie."

"This," said Miss Grush, bringing a ball of rock crystal from the cabinet and handing it to her guest, "was cut from the heart of a mountain in Thibet, and was brought to me by a Bonpa monk."

“What was his particular style of entertainment?”

“Oh, he didn’t give entertainments at all. He went on foot from Thibet to Calcutta, and took ship to New York, to expose some of the heresies of Buddhism which he had been led to believe was establishing itself in America. When he started back for his native mountains, he left that prayer wheel which you see in the corner.”

“How beautiful it is,” said Hugh, holding up the polished crystal ball, which mirrored every tint and color in the room. “The ancients used to believe that rock crystal was congealed ice.”

“Hold it closer to your face and examine it carefully,” suggested Miss Grush.

Her eyes glittered and her hand shook. The dark face grew gray, save for a bright spot in either cheek. The heaving of her bosom betrayed her excitement, and the deep lines at the corners of her mouth gave her an aspect of cunning and cruelty.

“It strains my eyes to do that.”

Miss Grush stole closer to him, with a gentle, undulating step.

“Don’t take your eyes off it. Concentrate your mind on that bright spot in the centre.”

He could feel her hot breath on his cheek. Brilliant waves of color swam through the clear depths of the shining sphere. The rich fragrance of sandalwood seemed to steal into his senses. She stroked his forehead gently.

“Put your whole soul into that spot of light,” she whispered. “See, see how fair it is, how marvellous!” Hugh stared at the crystal, held by sheer fascination. He felt his will power leaving him, but he could not resist. “There, there,” — drawing the tip of her fingers across his brow and cooing in his ear, — “see how your soul yields to mine.”

“My soul,” he muttered in a feeble monotone.

“Yes, yes. It’s all right. Don’t resist, but give yourself up to me.”

“To me,” he echoed. His eyes opened wider and the pupils dilated. The muscles of his face twitched, and he moistened his dry lips with his tongue.

“I don’t like this infernal — ”

His tongue refused to move, and his eyelids drooped slightly over the staring blue eyes. He was in a hypnotic sleep. Miss Grush closed the eyelids and drew a deep breath of relief. Her face was ghastly in its pallor. For an instant she watched her victim keenly, and then a sudden tigerish beauty came into her countenance and she kissed Hugh's pale lips. As she bent over the helpless youth, his fine, thin features and aristocratic brow seemed to excite her evil nature, and her lip curled scornfully.

"Easier than I thought," she murmured. "Good blood run to seed — no will power."

With noiseless step she moved to the wall and touched an electric button. A boy answered the summons.

"Tell Mr. Frewen I want to see him immediately. He's waiting for this message. You know where to find him?" The boy nodded and vanished.

No sound broke the stillness of the room but the regular breathing of the hypnotized victim. His face was as white as death, and the crystal ball was still clutched in his rigid hand.



“‘AH! GOOD EVENING, MY LADY.’”

A lock of yellow hair had fallen across the high, blue-veined forehead. Miss Grush watched him for a moment and rubbed her hands softly together. Then she glided to a large mirror and looked critically at her own face, perking her head from side to side and smoothing her black hair.

“Not so bad,” she whispered. “A little thin and sallow, but distinguished enough for a viscountess. Ah!” — with a slow, sweeping courtesy to her smiling reflection — “good evening, my lady! How charming your ladyship looks.”

Presently she sat down beside her victim and stroked his brow again.

“Open your eyes,” she commanded.

The eyelids fluttered for an instant, and Hugh regarded her with a fixed stare. Her black eyes burned feverishly. She put her face close to his and looked into his pale eyes.

“Lord Delaunay, you love me.”

Hugh continued to stare at the temptress without speaking.

“You love me and want me to be your wife,” she purred.

"Yes," answered Hugh.

"What is your father's name?"

"Father's name," he echoed mechanically.

"Yes, dear. Think hard—your father's name."

"The Viscount Delaunay."

"He's dead, isn't he?"

"Dead."

"What was his Christian name?"

"Christian name"—he knit his brows as if struggling with the thought.

"Your father's Christian name." She drew her fingers across his cheek and brushed his hair back.

"Philip Eustace Godfrey."

"Your mother's name? Tell me, dear."

"Catherine Le Breux Marie Dorsay."

"Oh, Hugh! how you love me! And we are to be married now—married forever and ever. Where is your ring?"—she looked in alarm at his hands—"the ring Miss Remington gave you—that curious old crusader's ring?"

Hugh brought it forth from his pocket. It was the historic family ring given to his fighting

ancestor at the siege of Jerusalem by Tancred. In an impulsive moment Miss Remington had remembered him at Christmas by presenting him with the curious old ring, unknowing that it had been his since childhood.

“What a lovely bit it is!” said Miss Grush, fitting it on her finger. “Where did it come from?”

Before he could answer there was a knock at the door, and Miss Grush admitted a little old man in shabby clerical attire. His wrinkled face and watery eyes, seen through iron-bound spectacles, bespoke cunning and avarice. Behind him strode Madame Grocrott, the spiritualist medium, whose strong face beamed with smiles.

“Oh,” cried the Madame, “we have come from the gate of truth to sit in the temple of love. A thousand congratulations, my dear young people.”

“A nasty night,” said the old man, laying his hat on the table. “But love defies the elements. The wetter the night the dryer the heart.” And he cackled shrilly.

“My fiancé, Mr. Hugh Dorsay,” said Miss

Grush, presenting Hugh, whose countenance was expressionless. Hugh, dear, this is the Rev. Mr. Frewen."

"Delighted to meet you, sir," exclaimed Mr. Frewen, producing a prayer-book and clearing his throat with a cough. "My congratulations."

Hugh's face was like a mask. His eyes had a fixed, stony look.

"Mr. Dorsay is not well," explained Miss Grush, stroking her victim's head. He is a little deaf, so that you must speak clearly. We would like to have the ceremony over as soon as possible, as he must leave the city at once. We have urgent reasons for keeping the marriage secret for the present. I think I have explained to you, Mr. Frewen, that the condition of his nerves is such that he cannot endure any excitement. Please make it as short as you can."

"Certainly," said Mr. Frewen, thumbing his prayer-book, "I shall take no more time than is necessary. The situation is a little unusual, but we must all accommodate ourselves to the exigencies of love—he! he! he!"

"What a beautiful sight it is to see two lovers

asking the benediction of God upon their union!" said Madame Grocrot, piously. Then she leaned over to Miss Grush. "Is it safe?" she whispered; "will he answer?" Miss Grush winked and laughed. Madame Grocrot playfully pinched her hand.

All this time Hugh sat motionless, with a far-away look in his wide-open eyes. The exhaustion of his day's labor in the *Mail* office, the nervous strain of the scene in Madame Grocrot's house, and the intense reaction following the discovery that the secret of his identity was known to some one in New York had so weakened him, so unbalanced his normal condition, that he had easily fallen into Miss Grush's trap. The extraordinary conjunction of mystery and mental shock had given the wily adventuress her opportunity.

Mr. Frewen opened his book and adjusted his spectacles.

"Please stand up," he said.

Miss Grush took Hugh's hand, and together they stood before the clergyman.

"How sweet!" murmured Madame Grocrot,

clasping her hands on her bosom. "How lovely it is!"

Miss Grush cast her eyes down for a moment with an affectation of shyness, and after that she looked steadily into Hugh's white face.

Mr. Frewen read the marriage service, and under the compulsion of Miss Grush's eyes and voice, Hugh made the responses, intoning his words like the clergyman. He placed the ring of Tancred on her finger and repeated the vows like a man in a dream. He knelt beside her while the blessing was uttered, and afterward signed his name in the record-book while Mr. Frewen made out the marriage certificate.

"Kiss me," said Miss Grush in his ear.

He pressed his lips against her mouth and smiled faintly. Then they stood hand in hand.

"My sincere congratulations," cried the Madame, embracing the bride and kissing her on both cheeks. "Your ladyship —"

"'Ssh! not now" — and the black eyes snapped with anger. "We'll speak of that to-morrow."

"H'm, I think we'd better retire," said Mr.

Frewen, with a prolonged cackle. "He! he! Two's company and — well, you know the rest." And he took up his hat and moved toward the door with Madame Grocroft.

An hour passed. The heavy crystal ball rolled from the table and crashed on the floor. Hugh started and shook himself. His face twitched, and a look of returning consciousness came into his eyes. Miss Grush bent her glance upon him and placed her hand on his head, but he shook her off. His lips were wet with saliva. He was dimly aware of having yielded in a struggle with some invisible enemy. The air seemed to be filled with drifting fiery sparks. Something in the room fell with a loud thud, and Hugh awoke in his right mind, to find himself alone with the black-eyed adventuress. He blinked his eyes and yawned.

"Why, what a curious experience I've had," he said with a smile. "I'm afraid I've been rude enough to fall asleep. Do you know, I dreamed that we were married right in this room, and I can recall a book in which I signed my name as plainly as if it had happened; and, and" — he

laughed nervously — “I dreamed that I put my old ring on your finger, and — why, there’s that crystal ball on the floor, and — I remember it all now — you were trying to mesmerize me, and I tried to hold my own against you.”

He pressed his hand across his face and looked around the room in a bewildered way.

“I — I could have sworn we were married,” he said. “It was so real — and Madame Grocrot was here and a funny old rag-bag of a parson.”

Miss Grush looked at him tenderly and played with the green crystal heart at her throat.

“Would you have been sorry to find the dream true?” she said softly.

“Oh, come, now,” he answered, “you can’t expect me to say how I’d feel if I were an enchanted prince in a pantomime. Perhaps the joke would have been on you.”

She leaned her head sidewise and gave him a strange look out of her half-closed eyes. The indescribable gypsy expression that impressed him when he first saw her had returned to her face. She came nearer to him with a sinuous, swaying motion.

"Hugh, my husband," she purred.

"What?" he cried with a look of horror.

"It's all true, dearest," she said with a mocking smile, as she held up her hand and showed the ring of Tancred. "See, here is the ring, beloved. I am now your wedded wife, Viscountess Delaunay and the Countess of Castlehurst to be."

He gasped and staggered back.

"You're mad!" he shouted. "What vile trick is this and why have you stolen my ring, you shameless creature?"

"No, I'm not mad," she said in a steady voice. "We were married in regular form by a clergyman in the presence of a witness within the hour. My God, Hugh," — her bosom heaved and her cheeks glowed with color — "I was driven to this by my love. Don't, don't look at me like that. Forgive me and take me to your heart. I know I've taken a desperate chance for happiness, but my life has been so lonely, so miserable, and I love you as no woman ever loved a man before. Take me, Hugh, for I am your true wife before God and man."

"You damned adventuress!" he roared; but she fell on her knees at his feet and bowed her head.

"Curse me," she cried. "I deserve it! See, I am at your feet, dear—your lawful wife, whom you have sworn to love and cherish until death. Trample on me if you will, but oh, Hugh, Hugh, I've dared to do this for the love I bear you. I've had you for my own for this one hour, at least. I know it was wrong, but I have been so, so unhappy all my days, and seeing this one chance of heaven before me, I took it."

She burst into a wild fit of weeping.

"I'll work for you, I'll plan for you, I'll conquer success for you, dear," she sobbed. "I have brains and experience; I know the world; I know how to serve those I love—and I'll be your slave for life. Tell me to die, and I'll kill myself—tell me to live, and I'll live for you. Have pity, for you are a strong man and I am a weak woman whose existence has been one prolonged misery until this hour."

She raised her tear-stained face, her black hair unfastened and hanging about it like a cowl.

Hugh's countenance was stern, and there was a dangerous glitter in his blue eyes.

"Have you no fear of prison?" he said in a hard voice. "No, you needn't try any more tricks, for I'm on my guard" — she was gazing fiercely into his eyes as if to overpower him again. "You can't do it a second time. Wise men as well as fools may make mistakes, but it's only a fool who makes the same mistake twice. If it's true that I was trapped into a marriage ceremony, you'll have a chance to try the power of your arts on a judge and jury. Out of my way, you low woman!"

With a piercing cry of "Hugh!" she rose and tried to throw her arms about him, but he thrust her from him in disgust and rushed out of the room.

The deserted bride stood motionless, listening to the sound of his retreating footsteps. There were dark rings under her eyes, and she seemed to have suddenly grown older. She shivered and drew her garments about her as she went to the table and drank a mouthful of ale left in Hugh's glass. Then she perched herself on

the edge of the table, with one leg curled under the other, and lit a cigarette. In her hand was a crumpled paper, which she carefully straightened out. It was the marriage certificate. The cigarette smoke slipped from between her lips and curled about her head, and she smiled as she read the proof of her victory through the mist.

"Hugh Dorsay and Barbara Grush." She repeated the names over and over. Then, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror, she slid from the table and regarded herself earnestly in the glass.

"Poor girl!" she murmured, "you've had a hard time of it in this world. Fate has played you strange tricks." Then, with a sudden change of mood, she frowned at her face. "You devil, you ought to succeed."

Taking the ring from her finger, she examined it closely. The strange carving of the worn tablet, with its almost obliterated inscription, excited her curiosity, and she picked at it. The secret shutter of the tablet flew open, disclosing the sorrowful face of Christ. She shuddered and turned out the light.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. IRKINS was irritated. For years his newspaper had fiercely advocated war against Spain for the emancipation of the Cuban Republic; and now Congress had authorized the President to drive the Spaniards out of the western hemisphere, without even mentioning the *Mail*. Such ingratitude was not to be borne in silence. Nay, more, there was even a disposition on the part of rival newspapers to jeer at Mr. Irkins and to make light of the countless offerings he had laid upon the altar of freedom. The President had joined the crowned despots and brutal ministers of Europe in refusing to reply to Mr. Irkins's messages — answers prepaid — asking for signed statements regarding the *Mail's* war policy. His plan of campaign, telegraphed to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, had been ignored, and a distinguished

Admiral, to whom he had offered advice, had heartlessly asked him by wire whether he had ever heard of the man in Chicago who made a large fortune by minding his own business.

The master of strenuous journalism sat in his office reading the proofs of a double-leaded editorial challenging the leagued powers of Europe to interfere with the *Mail's* armed policy in Cuba, and darkly hinting at certain dire consequences that would follow. He tugged at his red beard and occasionally lifted his head to listen to the crowd in the street cheering the *Mail's* war bulletins. Mr. Irkins liked the sound. It was music in his ears. No other newspaper in the world could make the mob roar like that.

Presently he touched an electric button, and the door opened slightly.

"No, sir," said an unctuous voice, "I tell you that Mr. Irkins isn't in. I saw him leave the office a moment ago. You can catch him in the street, sir, if you're quick."

There was a pause, and then the door swung back and a white-haired, clean-shaven man, with

the saintly aspect of a bishop, entered and bowed to Mr. Irkins.

"You're invaluable, James," said the proprietor, without looking up from the proof sheets. "I really don't know how I'd get along without you."

The venerable attendant smiled gratefully.

"You lie like an angel."

James's shrewd eyes twinkled, and he coughed modestly at the compliment.

"Has Miss Grush come in?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Tell Mr. Benthorp I want to see him, and when Miss Grush arrives tell her to come to me immediately."

Mr. Irkins paced the room with long strides, pausing each time he reached the window, to watch the frantic, hurraing crowds in front of the *Mail's* bulletin board. His big, bony hands were locked behind his back, and there was a grim look in his pallid face. He smacked his lips impatiently. He was a strange man, with a strange ambition. Money, political honors, social distinction, literary eminence, domestic bliss—for these he cared little.

His one aim in life was to be able to say that the *Mail* had a larger circulation than any other newspaper in the world. Circulation was his god. Nothing interested him unless it contributed to the sale of the *Mail*. His philosophy was simple. The financier was great according to the number of dollars he owned, the politician was great according to the number of votes he could command, and the journalist was great according to the number of newspapers he sold. He was honest and even generous in his dealings with men. His powerful personality, penetrating mind, lightning-like intuition, amazing capacity for continued effort, and courage would have brought success to him in almost any sphere of life. But he worshipped at the altar of publicity, sacrificing fortune, health, friends, and peace for the sake of his deity. The great multitude in the street, which at that moment was lustily singing the national anthem, was simply so many readers. He was patriotic enough and eager to serve his country, but the war with Spain, after all, was a great opportunity for increasing the circulation of the *Mail*; the greater the battles and the fiercer the outburst of national passion,

the larger would be the sales of the *Mail*. The human race was a mere market for printed white paper.

The door opened and a tall man, with a severe, scholarly countenance and close-cropped white beard, entered the room.

"Ah, Mr. Benthorp!" said Mr. Irkins, briskly, taking up the proofs from his table. "I've been reading your editorial."

"How does it strike you, sir?"

"Um, the type's too small," said the proprietor, thrusting out his lower lip and eying the proofs critically. "Man alive, how do you expect to pound anything into the heads of a New York crowd in small type? Haven't I preached and preached and explained the necessity for large type? What man in that crowd out there knows the difference between an important or unimportant statement unless you scream it into his face?"

"But this editorial, sir, is addressed to the governments of Europe."

"Governments of Europe!" cried Mr. Irkins, with a frown. "How many copies of the *Mail* do you suppose the governments of Europe buy?"

Everything in my paper is addressed to the millions who read it and who forget to-morrow what they learn to-day. Why, think of a war editorial printed in brevier type!—just think of it soberly, Mr. Benthorp! You ought to be ashamed of your carelessness, sir. How can you hear the patriotic cries of that crowd and think in small type?” With a wave of his hand: “No, I won’t hear any argument. Set it in large type and—that’s all, Mr. Benthorp.”

As the tall editor retired, there was a rustle of skirts and Miss Grush stood before Mr. Irkins, pale and smiling, her close-fitting gray costume exhaling the odor of violets. His great brown eyes regarded her steadily, and he plucked his beard thoughtfully.

“Sit down, Miss Grush.”

“You wished to see me?” she asked meekly, without moving.

“Sit down. I’ve something to say to you.”

Miss Grush slid into a seat without taking her eyes off her employer. For a moment neither spoke. Mr. Irkins tapped the edge of his table with his fingers and drew a deep

breath. Then he swung his revolving chair around and faced her. The crowd outside roared like the ocean in a storm, the sound dying away in shrill ululations, with droning undertones of tin horns.

"Is it true that you have married Mr. Dorsay?"

There was a steely coldness in his voice. Miss Grush started and changed color.

"Has he —"

"No," said Mr. Irkins, in the same icy tone, "he has said nothing to me about it. He told me that he was in deep trouble, and asked to be sent to the firing line in Cuba. He starts for the front to-day."

She breathed a sigh of relief.

"But the marriage is recorded in the Bureau of Vital Statistics."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"You have no explanation to make?"

"None."

Mr. Irkins opened a drawer in the table and drew from it a document which he unfolded and examined with an air of interest.

"Your husband, John Baird, who is serving a term in the Joliet prison in Illinois for forgery, will be interested to know that his wife has —"

"For the love of God, Mr. Irkins, don't, don't betray me!" she cried in a terrified voice. "He is dying—almost dead—and I've a right to a divorce; I would have gone to the courts but for the shame of it. I couldn't let the world know me as a convict's wife. Have pity on me, sir. I've tried to live it down. A man can live two lives, but a woman—the world has no mercy for her. Oh, if you only knew what a hell life has been for me."

Her voice broke and she bowed her head, twining and twisting her fingers in agony.

"It seems to me, Miss Grush," said the journalist, grimly, "that this is a simple case of bigamy and that you cannot hope to escape a long term of imprisonment unless"—he hesitated and looked at her keenly—"unless you are willing to let your victim out of the trap."

She made an impulsive movement and at-

tempted to speak, but he raised his hand sternly.

"I can't imagine why you wanted to marry this young man," he continued. "He is poor, and you are not the kind of woman who falls in love."

"Your brother thought otherwise," she said sullenly.

"Ay, poor boy; but we'll let him and his sins rest in the grave. He wronged you in your youth, and he paid bitterly for it afterward. Your dissolute, vagabond mother—making a weapon of your shame—drove him to suicide."

"He found me an innocent girl, scarcely old enough to know right from wrong," she cried passionately.

"And your soulless parent cozened and tempted him into the sin that ruined his life and embittered mine. I lost sight of you until you turned up in my service, and it was agreed between us that this matter should never be spoken of again." He gulped, and clenched his hands. "Why do you disturb the dead?"

"You would rob me of my last hope in life," she panted, her black eyes blazing with hatred and a deadly grayness stealing over her face. "John Baird is dying in prison; he'll not live a week. What if I have anticipated his death? What have I to do with him? I changed my name in order to escape from the shame he brought upon it, and I've lived an honest life — oh, God!" — she clutched at her flat bosom savagely — "why do you stand in my way? Why do you torment me? Isn't it enough that I've kept silent all these years? and now — now —"

The lean throat choked with passion. Mr. Irkins paced the room without speaking, his hands clasped behind him, and his gaunt countenance working with suppressed emotion. The thunderous applause of the crowd in the street shook the air again and again, but he took no note of it as he moved to and fro with regular, noiseless tread.

"Your mother was a half-breed Arab," he said, without looking at her. "You have inherited her black art as well as her blood. God knows how you tricked young Dorsay into this marriage,

but it was some cunning deviltry that blinded his eyes and turned his brain. I know him too well to believe that he'd do it in possession of his ordinary senses. He's not a fool. You trapped him as your mother — ”

“ We were married by a clergyman in the presence of a witness,” said Miss Grush.

“ Yes, I know, I know,” — he continued to tread the carpet restlessly, — “ but it was a damnable plot of some kind. If I can't make him open his lips, by God, I've the key to yours.”

He turned upon her a face so terrible in its suggestion of ruthless force — the upper lip uncovering a row of sharp teeth, and the great brown eyes glowing under the bristling brows — that she cowered before him.

“ Come, out with it ! ” he exclaimed, stamping his foot.

“ What do you want ? ” she whimpered, without raising her eyes.

“ The truth, without reservation or evasion ! ”

“ And if I refuse to discuss my affairs with you any further ? ” She glanced at him furtively.

“ I'll hand you over to the police as a bigamist.”

"I love him."

"Bah !"

"Oh, Mr. Irkins, have some pity ! Mr. Dorsay sought me as a wife — believe me, he did. There was no trick, no deceit. We have been friends, companions, lovers for a long time."

"And you expect me to believe this ?"

"It's the simple truth. My only fault was in not waiting till my — till he was dead. Heaven be my judge, I am innocent of any offence but that." Her black eyes brimmed with tears. "Ah, you are a strong man, Mr. Irkins, and you can afford to be merciful to a woman. Take this from me and I am lost."

She stretched her hands out toward him and pleaded with her eyes. The harsh look died out of his face, and he ran his fingers through his coarse hair with an uneasy movement.

"I'm only a man," he said quietly, "and men sometimes make mistakes. You say Mr. Dorsay loves you, and married you of his own free will ?"

"As I hope for salvation."

He made a gesture of disgust and turned away.

“I have a strong affection for this young Englishman,” he said gravely, “and no harm shall come to him if I can prevent it.”

Touching an electric button, he waited in silence until the venerable attendant thrust his snowy head cautiously in the partly opened door.

“If Mr. Dorsay is in the building, tell him I want to see him at once.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And telephone to the Superintendent of Police that I would like him to send a detective sergeant to me on an urgent case that won’t wait. Stay!” —with a wave of his hand; “no, never mind that — it’ll do later. Get Mr. Dorsay. Be quick, James.”

Miss Grush bounded out of her chair like a frightened animal.

“What do you mean to do?” she screamed.

Mr. Irkins sat down at his table and looked at her calmly. Her drawn lips were bloodless, her thin nostrils dilated, and her eyes twitched from side to side.

“I mean to bring you face to face with him. If you have lied, you know your fate. There

is no escape. No, you can't get out," — she glanced wildly at the door, — "this electric lever on the table locks it. The door can only be opened from the outside now. I had that contrivance made after Senator Bantry assaulted me and escaped."

She looked at him dully for a moment; then an evil light played in her inky eyes. The old catlike softness came into her voice.

"Do you understand what you're doing? — what it means to me?"

He regarded her steadily. The hollow cheeks were bright with a sudden flow of blood; she was almost beautiful.

"I think I understand the situation, Miss Grush," he said slowly, as he sliced a sheet of a paper with a keen-edged paper-knife and flicked the fragments away with his fingers. "You're a more subtle student of the human heart than I take you to be, or you're a very desperate criminal. In either case you're playing a game which I confess I do not at this moment understand. One thing is quite certain — you've placed yourself within the reach of the law.

Bigamy" — he nodded his head and pursed his lips — "is a felony in this state."

He paused for a moment and played with the glittering point of the knife. Then he went on.

"It is fortunate that I learned of this marriage in time — very fortunate. Curiously enough, you and I are the only persons who are aware of the crime."

"What would you have me do?" she demanded, with a gesture of impatience. "The thing is done now."

"Give up your victim. Sign a confession of your crime and leave the country at once."

"And if I refuse?"

Mr. Irkins laid down the paper-knife and leaned his head on his hand, studying the pattern of the carpet.

"You shall go to prison," he said without a trace of feeling.

She sat rigidly upright with stunned, staring eyes. There was a faint rattle in her throat.

"You might as well appeal for mercy to that bronze," he added, tapping a massive paper-weight.

She gazed at him as he rose from the table and turned his back upon her. Her dark face was convulsed with instant fury. She crouched in her seat for a moment, trembling with passionate hate. Then she seized the bronze weight and hurled it at him. It struck the back of his head, and he fell to the floor without a sound.

Clutching the paper-knife, she stood over the prostrate body and watched a thin stream of crimson run along the white neck and lose itself in the beard. She seemed to be fascinated by the sight.

A sudden roar burst from the multitude in the street. The tumult grew louder and fiercer, with a hoarse accompaniment of singing and piercing, whistling notes.

As the storm of sound raged in the air, Miss Grush stirred the body with her foot. The hand in which she held the knife was seized from behind, and, turning with a low cry, she faced Hugh, who had closed the door behind him as he entered.

"You!" she stammered; and then, seeing

the look of horror in his face, she tried to twist herself from his grasp.

"Murderess!" he cried, as he caught her other wrist and forced her toward the wall.

For answer she sank her teeth in his hand and fought tigerously to escape. The shrieking of the crowd outside filled the little room with its discordant din, and through the tremendous roaring came the dull tramping and chanting of a passing procession. She writhed in his hands with desperate courage until the veins stood out on her forehead and her eyes started from their sockets. But his arms were too strong, and he pinned her against the wall. The knife fell to the floor.

"No! no!" she moaned. "Let me go. I didn't touch him. He fell—he—" A fit of sobbing choked her utterance.

"Why have you done this?" demanded Hugh, tightening his hold.

"He insulted me. Oh, Hugh! my husband! save your poor wife from shame. I can't tell you now—my brain is on fire—I can't think. Oh, Lord Delaunay, I did it for your sake,—believe me."

"You lying snake!" he muttered. "You would have murdered him."

In a twinkling the passion left her face and she drooped.

"Release my hands," she whispered. "I can't escape now; I'm in your power. You're hurting me."

He relaxed his grip, and she staggered to a chair and sat down with a convulsive sigh. Her countenance was haggard, and a bright stain of blood showed on her lips. Instinctively she smoothed the folds of her gray dress and straightened her bonnet, which had fallen awry in the struggle. Her coolness seemed to return.

"I'll give you up," she said. "All I ask is my liberty."

"Your —?"

"Hush!" she purred, watching his eyes. "Give me a chance for freedom, an hour's start, and you'll never hear of me again. It was all a mistake" — she panted like a hunted creature — "a blind, foolish mistake. I was mad, mad; your title tempted me. As there is a God in heaven, I will never trouble you. What will you

gain by sending to prison a woman who can claim you as her husband?"

Hugh set his jaws hard and shook his head. A deep groan came from the figure on the floor, and Mr. Irkins struggled to raise himself. In an instant Hugh was kneeling beside him, supporting the languid, bloody head in his arms. Mr. Irkins opened his eyes. They were bright with fever.

"Big type!" he commanded wildly. "Big type for the common people. They can see it and understand it. Let the aristocracy read small type—there's no circulation in it. I want to address the millions. What?—midnight! and no pictures for the first page. Print the President's picture, the governor's, the mayor's, anybody's picture—make a brilliant show-window if you want to sell—eh, Mr. Dorsay?" Hugh was rubbing his employer's temples. "Why, what are you doing?—what's the matter?—who, why,—what's that shouting for?—oh, my head!" The wounded man swooned.

Glancing behind him, Hugh saw that Miss Grush had escaped from the room. Dashing the door open he summoned the attendant.

"Miss Grush," he exclaimed, seizing the astonished old man by the shoulders and shaking him.

"Why didn't you stop her?"

"Stop her?" answered James as he wrested himself indignantly away from the excited youth.

"Why should I?"

"Where is she?"

"Don't know, sir. She left the building just now, and she asked me to tell you not to forget that she had your ring."

Hugh's jaw dropped at the mention of the ring of Tancred which he had placed on her finger in the hypnotic trance when he uttered his marriage vow.

"Call the police!" he shouted. "She has attempted to kill Mr. Irkins. Give the alarm! — telephone for detectives! — send for a doctor! — quick! quick! he may be dying."

Returning to the room he found Mr. Irkins half-raised on his elbow, his head resting against the leg of the table. The proprietor of the *Mail* raved in a weak voice. His mind was battling with problems of journalism, fiercely criticising, denouncing, exhorting, and commanding. When

the pale little doctor arrived, he declared that the patient would recover, but that it might be many weeks before he could explain the crime.

All through the night Hugh sat by the sick man's bedside, while the police were searching New York in vain for a trace of Miss Grush. From time to time the detectives came to the hospital and questioned him, but he could give them no clew to the whereabouts of the fugitive. Mr. Irkins was a childless widower, and there was none to question Hugh's right to watch the gaunt face and moisten the fevered lips. Just before daybreak the sufferer became partly conscious. Seeing Hugh bending over him, he smiled.

"It's all right, my boy," he said. "She can't harm you. She —"

But the effort to think was too great, and he relapsed into delirium, appealing to the quiet nurse to get the paper to press in time for the Southern mail connections.

After a few hours' sleep Hugh went to the office. As he reached his desk, an attendant

handed him a note addressed in Miss Grush's neat handwriting.

"A boy brought it about midnight," he explained.

Hugh opened the envelope and read her message : —

"TO THE VISCOUNT DELAUNAY : —

"My dear Hugh: I write to you as one dead. Whether I seek safety in the grave or find some other asylum, I want you to know that you shall never see my face again. Try to think of me as a woman tempted beyond her strength. There are others, with less temptation than mine, who have sold their bodies and souls for titles, without a word of condemnation from the world. I thought I saw a new life opening before me, a life in which I might live up to the full measure of my woman's vanity. And now the black pit yawns at my feet.

"The ring you gave me I shall keep; and yet it seems to burn my flesh. I opened it to-night and the Christ head made me weep.

So I saw that face when I was an innocent child. My God! what have I done? Is there no expiation for my sin? Am I to live the life of a hunted criminal?—and only yesterday the brightest ambition of my heart was almost realized.

“I ask you to believe that I had no thought of injuring Mr. Irkins when I entered his room. I was in a trap. He threatened me, and I lost my head. The blow was not premeditated. You saw me with a knife in my hand, but there was no murder in my soul. I was bewildered, stunned, almost crazed by the result of my mad act. Even now I can see the blood stealing across his neck and hear the shrieking of the crowd in the street. It seemed to me at that moment as if a thousand spirits of the air were clamoring for vengeance. And then you came and— I need not tell you the rest.

“Where shall I turn for rest or hope? I dare not give the least hint of my heavy sorrow to any one! I must bear my anguish alone. O that I might tell some one—tell it all—free my mind and heart—ease my soul of its burden. I have never known what it was to

be lonely until now. Ah, friend that once was, pity me and pray for me, and, if you can, forgive me. I seek the road that leads to peace; God only knows how I will find it. To-night I tried to pray for the first time since my childhood, but the words stuck in my throat.

"There is one thing in my life that I have not told you—that I cannot tell you, because my woman's hand will not write it; for, after all, I am a woman, even though the police are tracking me and the stain of blood is on my hands. If you knew my history, it might help you to understand how hard it is for some to live sinlessly.

"This is the last you shall ever hear from me. From this day I shall die to all who have known me.

"BARBARA GRUSH."

"Any news of the woman?" said a voice at his elbow.

Hugh turned and saw the sharp-eyed detective who was in charge of the search for the fugitive.

"None," he answered, thrusting her letter in his pocket.

It was drawing toward noon, and the crowd

which gathered every day in front of the *Mail* office to read the war bulletins began to find its voice. Hugh walked to a window and watched the swaying, heaving stretch of upturned, eager faces. As he looked, the deep murmuring of voices swelled into a deafening shout. Hats were thrown into the air. The crowd surged forward frantically, and men and women ran from every direction to join it. Louder and louder grew the utterance of the multitude, until it seemed to come from the throat of a whirlwind. Something unusual had happened. An acre of human beings seemed to have suddenly gone stark mad. Here and there men were dancing and waving their hands. A small boy carrying an American flag was lifted from the ground and tossed from hand to hand over the heads of the crowd. Some mighty emotion swept along Broadway. An endless stream of humanity poured swiftly toward the central scene of frenzied enthusiasm.

An office-boy approached Hugh.

"The managing editor wants to see you, Mr. Dorsay," he said.

As he went toward the editor's room, Hugh experienced a strange feeling of excitement. The atmosphere was electric. Messengers were dashing through the rooms and corridors; hatless, coatless, wild-visaged men came pressing up the stairway; above the tempestuous roaring of the crowd sounded the iron clamor of church bells near and far.

"Mr. Dorsay," said the managing editor, "this news means that you must start for Asia as soon as you can get ready."

"What news?"

"Why, haven't you heard? Admiral Dewey has sunk the entire Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. There was a rumor of the victory in one of the papers this morning, and it has just been confirmed by the government."

"And I —?"

"You're to go to the Philippines at once. I'm sorry I can't consult Mr. Irkins, but I'm sure he would have chosen you. It's a great opportunity for you, Mr. Dorsay."

"Thank God!" said Hugh. "I'm glad to go away."

CHAPTER IX

THE tropical sunlight lay hot on the shrivelled brown rice-fields and the dusty road reaching tortuously along fringes of waving green and straggling lines of native huts toward old Manila. In spite of the heavy carts rumbling behind slow-pacing water-buffaloes and the sauntering movement of peasants along the way, there was an impressive stillness in the parched air. Here and there could be seen an American soldier, in russet khaki uniform, keeping guard in the shadow of a tree, and across a stretch of bare, shimmering meadows a huddle of military tents whitened the green slope on the verge of a cool bamboo thicket. The dense vegetation in the rank ditches, touched with vivid spots of scarlet and orange, the brilliant green of the fronded woods in the distant heat-haze, and the lazy lizards, lying, jewel-like, on every boulder, spoke of

a climate innocent of snow or ice, an eternal germination, without death or resurrection.

In the shade of an ylang-ylang tree a young American lieutenant sat on a wiry Philippine pony, plucking fragrant green blossoms from the drooping boughs, and occasionally watching a point where the road turned under a group of cocoanut palms toward the bamboo jungle in the distance. As he gazed along the highway, a tall young man in a white linen riding-dress rode into sight. His tanned face was eloquent of exposure to the sun, and the dust and foam on his jaded pony indicated a long and hard journey. The officer shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment and then spurred his beast forward with a ringing cry of welcome.

"Hello, Dorsay!" he shouted. "What's the news? How's the nigger government?"

"Glad to see you again, Perry," said Hugh, heartily. "It was good of you to come out to meet me. I've had a rough ride, and I'm hungry and thirsty. Lend me your canteen — mine's dry."

After a gurgling draught from the canteen, the

two young men walked their ponies side by side toward the city.

"I couldn't understand the hints in your message from Malolos," said the lieutenant, "and I'm blessed if I can see why you rode in here instead of taking the railway ; but the ways of an Englishman are past finding out."

"I came down on the train as far as Malinta," said Hugh, "and rode around this way to take a look at the Philippine troops and sound the officers. We're going to have trouble, Perry. They're getting ready to fight. Don't laugh, old fellow ; I know what I'm talking about now. An hour ago I saw them serving out cartridges in the trenches. It was all I could do to persuade them to let me through the lines."

The officer whistled.

"That looks like business," he exclaimed. "I don't believe they realize it at headquarters ; and, yet, I don't know — the sentries are being doubled and every man that can be spared from the city has been sent out on the line. We are throwing up new earthworks everywhere around Manila to-day."

They passed a settlement of thatched huts. A group of chattering natives was suddenly silent and scowling. One youth, bolder than the rest, brandished a keen-edged bolo and spat contemptuously on the ground. The riders exchanged glances and laughed.

"They won't stand fire after the first volley," said the lieutenant. "Every man-jack of them wears an anting-anting under his shirt to charm away bullets, and so long as they had to deal with the marksmanship of the Spaniards, that superstition grew stronger; but they'll change their minds when they face men who know how to shoot straight. It'll take a powerful hoodoo to save a man from a Krag-Jorgenson with an American soldier behind it."

"I talked with Aguinaldo to-day," said Hugh. "At first he strutted up and down his audience room and refused to speak. Every time he passed a mirror he looked at himself. I could hardly control the muscles of my face. Then he raised himself to his full height—which wasn't very impressive, mind you—and declared that the Philippine Republic was prepared to main-

tain its independence; and that if blood was shed, the guilt would be ours—those were his very words.”

“The little humbug!”

“I don’t know, Perry. He takes himself seriously, and that’s half the secret of leadership. His people are ready to follow him, no matter what the odds may be.”

“See here, Dorsay,” cried the lieutenant, “I don’t mind telling you that I’m glad a fight is coming on. Mine’s a poor trade in times of peace. We’ll have to take the conceit out of the niggers sometime, and we might as well do it now. You can bet your last dollar that Americans will never let go of anything they get their hands on—not if it’s worth keeping. A Britisher like you ought to understand that sort of feeling.”

“I understand it,” said Hugh, “but I don’t admire it. I’m getting to be a good deal of an American myself, and now that the Spaniards have been driven out—”

“We ought to turn the archipelago over to the natives and say: ‘Here you are! Kill, rob, burn, raise merry hell, and enjoy yourselves.’

Not on your life, Dorsay. We've left our continent at last, and we're a world power. The stars and stripes are in Asia to stay."

Something in the young soldier's tone brought the blood to Hugh's face. The fighting instinct of his ancestry was stirred. Eight months with the American army in the Philippines had roughened and toughened him. He was no longer the pale, diffident youth who cowered helplessly within himself in the midst of the whirl and rush of modern American life, but a brown-faced, alert adventurer, half correspondent and half scout. From his dusty slouch hat to his spurred boots he looked like a soldier, and he sat in his saddle with a firm and easy grace. A life of keen competition in the open air—now trailing over the rough mountain paths, now sleeping in an isolated hut among treacherous natives, and now riding, as if for life, to reach the cable office in Manila before his rivals—had awakened in his blood some of the fire of his crusading forebears.

"I'm in for the fight if it's coming," he said, "but I'm terribly worried just now. An old

friend of mine is due here from Hong Kong tomorrow, and his daughter accompanies him."

The lieutenant threw his head back and rolled about in his saddle shrieking with laughter.

"I don't mind telling you that you're an ass, Perry," said Hugh, indignantly.

"Of course, of course," exclaimed the officer, with another convulsion; "but what's her name?"

"Mr. Martin is the veteran of the *Mail* staff, a dear old fellow who thinks that human history began on the Fourth day of July, and he's coming out to study the situation here from the standpoint of the Declaration of Independence. Miss Martin is the sweetest little patriot that ever made an Englishman wish he had been born somewhere else. I didn't understand why people raved about American girls till I met her. I say, Perry," — Hugh looked at his companion earnestly, — "this will be a dangerous place for a woman if the natives break loose, eh?"

"You're right, Dorsay. If the niggers ever force their way into Manila and get the upper hand, they'll spare neither women nor children. You ought to get permission for your friends to

stay in the old fort in the walled city till the crisis is over. In case the natives break through our lines Miss Martin could reach one of our men-of-war in the harbor. But why, in heaven's name, does an American girl come to Manila at a time like this? Why doesn't she stay in Hong Kong?"

Hugh smiled, and stroked his pony's neck affectionately.

"When you meet her, you won't ask that question," he said. "She's the only woman I've met who would be likely to make a great sacrifice for her country."

"Then you haven't met many American girls. Why, they're the very backbone of the republic. It was my mother who chose a military career for me; my father wanted to take me into his office and make a lawyer of me. Bless her dear face, she kept my sword under her pillow for a week before I came out here."

In a few minutes they were in the actual suburbs of the city, and a cool breeze from the salt water beyond fanned their faces as they clattered along the dusty streets. Fair resi-

dences, surrounded by wide latticed verandas, rose in the midst of gardens and groves ; little rows of huts, with here and there a native shop or wine shanty ; stone churches and monasteries, scarred and splintered by artillery fire, and inhabited by the invading American soldiery ; dreary reaches of ashes and blackened ruins — the wreck of hundreds of homes ; picturesque Spanish houses pitted with bullet holes — reminders of the last futile stand of the Spaniards ; abandoned military trenches and overturned barricades of stone ; processions of clumsy carts drawn by sluggish water-buffaloes ; half-naked Chinese porters staggering under burdens carried on poles across their perspiring shoulders ; crazy little carriages without springs, bumping and swaying behind thin ponies, — these were the sights and sounds that greeted the riders as they entered the seat of American power in Asia.

Soldiers in khaki were still swaggering valiantly along the pavements of the Escolta — richest and busiest of Philippine streets — but the native soldiers and their bedizened officers had vanished from the city.

"They've all gone to the field," said the lieutenant. "Why, only this morning I saw my native cook in a colonel's uniform. When he caught sight of me, he gave a military salute, threw his chest out, and strode grandly up the street, with his brand-new sword swinging between his legs. I nearly fell off my horse. Damn the rascal! he hadn't even the manners to wash the dishes before he gave me the slip."

"Such are the stern necessities of war," said Hugh.

They turned into a side street and encountered a native carrying a huge serpent coiled around the branch of a tree. Reining in their ponies, they watched him as he caressed the drugged reptile and entreated the passing throngs to buy it.

"Best rat-catcher in the world," said Perry.

"I know it. I've seen lots of them for sale. It's a funny idea, though, to keep a monster like that in the house instead of a cat. By George, I've an idea. Here, you! — how much?" Hugh beckoned to the serpent vender.

"Twanty-fi peseta," answered the native, holding up the sleepy python.

"Twenty-five pesetas? Good! Will he bite?"

"No bite. See!" and he rubbed his grimy hand over the serpent's nose. "*Muy bien serpiente, señor.*"

With the assistance of the native Hugh wrapped the big reptile in his saddle blanket, and swinging it across his saddle, moved down the street with his astonished companion.

"What in thunder are you going to do with it?" demanded the lieutenant.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Of course."

"On your honor, now?"

"Certainly."

"No matter what happens?"

"Torture shall not wring it from me."

"Well, I owe Captain Spildew, the censor, a grudge, and I'm going to give the old churl a lively experience. You must come along, Perry, and help me out. He's taken the heart out of every despatch I've written for the *Mail*, and I can't get the news through on the cable. This time I'll square accounts. You'll come, won't you?"

"I might get myself into a scrape, Dorsay,"

said the young officer. "This is a bad time for pranks. Still, Spildew is such a boorish old scoundrel that I'd like to see the thing through. He has a holy horror of snakes."

"And correspondents," added Hugh. "It's an extraordinary thing that a practical nation should allow a dunderhead like that man to decide what shall be known in America about the occupation of this great empire."

"Well, count me in," said the officer. "Spildew cut my name out of the cabled description of the charge I led when we attacked Manila."

Passing through a narrow street lined with Chinese shops, the young men dismounted at the Hotel Oriente, a vast square structure, facing an open space, around which a score of weaponless Spanish officers strolled dejectedly under the scant shade of half-grown trees, waiting for the tardy funds that were to carry them back to their native land. Hugh nodded to a noble-looking Spaniard in a captain's uniform.

"How are you, Blanco? No news from home?"

"None," said the officer. "It is a terrible

fate for a soldier, to wait and wait and wait, after our flag has been conquered and furled. Spain has forgotten us. We are ignored by the Americans and are mocked by the natives. And this after four hundred years of sovereignty over this soil. Ah, what have you here?" — poking the muffled serpent, which Hugh had laid on the pavement.

"A live python."

The Spaniard opened the blanket and examined the serpent.

"It is the *sauá*, a gentle monster that lives on rats. When he grows larger, he will eat chickens and pigs. We used to have one in our barracks at San Fernando, but he made a meal of the general's pet dog and was killed for it."

"See here, captain, he's too drowsy. I want to make him lively. We're going to have some fun with a friend — that is, a sort of a friend."

The officer's black eyes sparkled.

"A cold bath will make him wide awake. My servant will assist you. *Aqui, Manuel!*"

And he carefully instructed the surprised peon in the art of arousing a stupefied serpent. "*Asi, asi! avánte, Manuel!*" The servant rolled his eyes, hesitated, and then, flinging the sleeping reptile on his shoulder, carried it into the hotel.

"And now to write my despatch announcing the coming battle with Aguinaldo's forces," said Hugh. "If I get it through, Perry, my reputation as a prophet will be made. It all depends on Spildew. Come up to the room and get ready."

Hugh's room was on the first story — a large chamber, with a floor of polished wood, smelling strongly of kerosene oil. A four-posted bed with a woven cane bottom, two chairs, a washstand, and a small table were the furniture. On the walls hung native spears and bolos, a shield of buffalo hide, a Spanish flag, a picture of the Virgin, riddled with bullet holes, and the correspondent's scant wardrobe. Two saddles and a heap of riding-boots were piled in the corner.

At the head of the bed a photograph was pinned to the wall. It was the portrait of a

girl. As the comrades entered the room, the young lieutenant stood before the photograph and examined the face intently.

"Jee-rusalem! What a lovely face, Dorsay."

"Miss Martin," said Hugh, seating himself at the table and beginning to write his despatch.

"The girl who comes to-morrow?"

Hugh nodded his head.

"No wonder you're nervous, you scamp!" The officer stood with his feet wide apart and studied the portrait with a critical air. "An American, that's sure; no other girl in the world carries her head like that. And the eyes—how sweet and true they look! I don't want to be impertinent, old man, but is she your—" and he slowly winked one eye.

"Perry," said Hugh, rising and placing his hand on the lieutenant's shoulder, "you're the best friend I have out here, and I'd trust you to the end of time. We've seen some rough times together, and I've learned to know you as a straight, manly fellow. Yes, that's the girl of my heart, the only woman I have loved or

can love. And yet, Perry, I can't marry her. I dream of her night and day. Her face is always before me. But in a weak moment I was trapped into doing something — There, I've said enough; I can't tell you my secret. It's enough that I've forfeited the right to ask any woman to be my wife."

"Was it —"

"Nothing disgraceful, Perry — you'll believe that? No, I'm simply tangled up by fate — tied hand and foot."

"You're a queer chap, Dorsay. I don't believe I ever met another like you. Here we've been eight months together, and I've told you the history of every member of my family and confessed my soul to you a hundred times; and now, by thunder! I find you the mysterious hero of a romance that has no beginning and isn't going to have any ending. Come, now, I've earned the right to talk frankly to you, and there can be only two explanations of your situation. Either you have compromised your name" — Hugh shook his head — "or you have a wife already. I've hit it. I can see it in your eye.

By God, Dorsay! I didn't think you were that kind of—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Hugh, with a look that chilled his companion's enthusiasm, "you're striking deeper than you intend. If another man said that, I'd knock him down."

"I'm sorry I said it, Dorsay. There now,"—he grasped Hugh's hand fervently,—“I know you're a decent fellow."

"Somewhere in the world, Perry, there's a woman who wears a ring I put on her finger. I didn't know what I was doing,—I was in a mesmeric trance,—but I pronounced the words that can bind heaven and hell together on earth. I'm an innocent victim, but the thing's done. You're the first man I've told since it happened."

"Does she know?"—with a jerk of the thumb toward the photograph.

"No, thank God!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you've been hugging this thing to your breast all this time, when a lawyer could have got you out of the scrape in a jiffy?"

"No lawyer can bring me back my ring."

"Ring be hanged! What you want is the decree of a court."

"I've no proof."

"Neither has she."

"She has two witnesses."

"Where is the hussy now?"

"I don't know, Perry. Nobody knows."

"Well, I'll be thumped if this isn't the strangest case I ever heard of. It's a regular mediæval plot — a witch, an enchanted ring, a spell-bound hero, and a beautiful maiden just out of his reach. Why, it sounds like a story out of a yellow-covered novel. Wake up, my boy, you're dreaming."

"No, it's not a dream, but a frightful reality. And now you can understand why I haven't always been as jolly as the others, and why I've gone off by myself on these long journeys into the interior, just to think and think. And now she's coming to Manila — Perry, do you understand?"

A vigorous hand-shake was the lieutenant's only answer.

"You'd better write your despatch," he suggested. "Time's flying, and I must get back to headquarters."

"Order something to eat," said Hugh, sitting down to his work again.

The officer left the room, and, as the door closed behind him, Hugh took the photograph from the wall, kissed it, and thrust it in his pocket. Before he had finished the despatch Perry returned.

"Fried eggs again!" he groaned. "It's at least the thousandth time you've had that dish since you came here. My laundryman has taken a commission in the Philippine army, and all my shirts have disappeared with him. No ice, either. The fellow with the key to the refrigerator put on a lieutenant's uniform this morning, and has gone forth to seek liberty or death, taking my new trousers with him."

They went into the great cool dining room, where a barefooted native, in a ragged, unwashed shirt, served the despised fried eggs on cracked plates, and watched them with sullen, sly eyes.

"That fellow will be in the trenches with a rifle before morning," said the officer. "He'd like to cut our throats."

After their meal the young men descended to the street, where they found a ramshackle carriage, with the Spanish captain's servant sitting on the seat with the driver, the awakened serpent wriggling in a canvas bag between his brown feet. On the way to the censor's house Hugh explained his plan and gave the servant minute directions.

When they reached the two-storied white villa in which Captain Spildew planned his devices to keep war correspondents from evading the rules of censorship, that redoubtable individual appeared at an upper window and summoned them to ascend to his presence. They were followed by the noiseless native, who carried the bound python and skulked stealthily in the shadow of the upper corridor while they entered the censor's sitting room. The oppressor of militant journalism was of harmless aspect, short, stocky, paunchy, and inclined to baldness, a precise, emotionless man, who regarded his vis-

itors coldly through his spectacles, and received Hugh's despatch in a grudging manner.

The comrades seated themselves and watched the door beyond which the soft-footed native was releasing the serpent, while Captain Spildew read the despatch and smacked his lips unpleasantly.

"This reference to Colonel Danton has got to come out," he growled, as he made a mark with his fat blue pencil against the offending words. "No heroizing; it's forbidden. No, you needn't explain—it can't pass. The moment an officer gets his name in the newspapers he thinks he's entitled to run the whole army."

The head of the python appeared in the doorway, and the glistening folds of mottled green and brown came undulating after it. The comrades nudged each other as the reptile drew its pulsing length slowly over the sill.

"This is simply idiotic," muttered the captain. "I won't allow a word of it to go on the cable. Why, it's a prediction of war, a flat contradiction of the official reports."

Silently the serpent moved along the smooth

white matting, coiling its body and raising its head with a steady, oscillating movement, the beady eyes glittering and the red tongue playing restlessly.

Spildew crumpled the paper in his hand contemptuously. At that moment he caught sight of the python. His jaw dropped and his face whitened. His look of horror brought the young men to their feet. The reptile drew its tail around a chair and overturned it. Hugh drew his revolver and advanced toward the monster.

"Don't move, captain," he said in a tragic whisper. "If you attract his attention he'll strike—it's sure death."

The censor shuddered and closed his eyes. Hugh aimed at the serpent's head and fired. With an upward leap, the python twisted itself into a writhing knot, its bloody head beating the floor furiously. Again Hugh fired. The serpent struggled over the stained matting, twisting and untwisting its terrible form, striking wildly with its shattered head and waving its tail. It wound itself about a sofa and crushed the wood

in its agonized embrace. Again and again Hugh's revolver sent bullets into the blood-dripping, curling folds. Then, seizing a bolo which hung on the wall, he cut the python in two with a single stroke of the razor-edged weapon.

There was no tremor in his muscles, no fear in his steady blue eyes. The lion blood of his ancestors ran red in his veins, and like them, he could play in the presence of death. The weakness wrought by centuries of overbreeding and luxury had vanished. He laid the reddened blade on the censor's desk with a smile.

"That was a close shave," he said quietly.

The captain sat in his chair like a man paralyzed. His eyes bulged from their sockets. His native servants crowded in the doorway, cowering and chattering. Perry stood in the middle of the room, revolver in hand, his eyes shining with excited admiration. No one spoke for a moment. Then the censor raised himself to his feet with an effort.

"How did it get here?" he roared at his servants, pointing to the ghastly wreck. "I'll have you beaten black and blue for this, you dogs!"

Then turning to Hugh he put forth a grateful hand. "I can't express my feelings, Mr. Dorsey," he stammered. "I believe that I owe my life to you."

The tall young correspondent struggled to keep a straight face. His sense of humor strove hard with a perception of the advantage his practical joke had given him over the bully. The great snake had been as harmless to man as a tame kitten, and he felt an inward twinge in the presence of undeserved gratitude.

"It's nothing at all, captain," he said with an involuntary blush. "You'd do as much for me. It was an ugly customer, though. Ugh!" and he spurned the still quaking monster with his foot.

"This despatch," said Spildew, spreading out the crumpled paper with trembling fingers — "is it an important matter to you to get it through?"

"Very."

"I'll take chances on it."

He ringed each page with a blue line, signed his initials, and handed the despatch to Hugh.

"You've just got time to make the cable

office," he said. "Better hurry. It's nearing five o'clock."

"This is very handsome of you, sir," said Hugh, gravely, as he put the paper in his pocket and returned his revolver to its holster.

"Oh, you'll find me pretty generous when you take the right side of me," said the captain, swelling out his breast with conscious virtue.

The lieutenant winked over the censor's shoulder.

"Yes, sir," continued Spildew, squaring himself and wagging his head. "I'm the most misunderstood man in the army. There isn't a better-natured or more obliging man in Manila — that is, when you understand me."

"I think I understand you now," said Hugh, with a meaning smile. "Come, Perry, we must make a dash for the cable."

When they reached the street, the lieutenant threw back his head and uttered a roar of laughter. He doubled up as if in pain, slapped his thigh, straightened out and guffawed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Whoof—ha! ha! ha!" he wheezed, hold-

ing his sides and shaking his head. "It was tremendous! I wouldn't have missed it for a captain's commission. Ha! ha! ha! St. George and the dragon wasn't in it. By thunder! Dorsay, for an Englishman you're not so slow."

They stepped into the squeaky carriage and went lurching over the rough street toward the cable station, a fresh rush of air from the sparkling bay blowing against them.

"Do you know," said Hugh, "for a moment I was afraid that the snake would do some harm. It was a brutal joke; but I've had my revenge at last. A year ago I couldn't have done it to save my life."

"I've noticed the change in you, Dorsay. You're like a new man. There isn't a steadier hand or braver heart in the Philippines."

"Don't chaff me, Perry."

"It's atavism, my boy. Somewhere, away back in your family, there has been a stout old English bulldog, and it only needed a touch of this rough life to bring his spirit to life again. I'll bet you had soldier forefathers."

"Some day I may be able to tell you the story of my house — it's a queer tale."

"What! more mystery? — more romance?"

"You shall judge for yourself when you hear it."

The despatch was handed in to the manager of the cable station five minutes before the hour for closing. Then the comrades separated, the young officer pleading that duty compelled him to return to headquarters.

Hugh went back to the Hotel Oriente in a state of serene elation. He felt confident that an immediate conflict between the American army and the native troops was inevitable, and the news he had cabled to the *Mail* would put a proud feather in his professional cap.

Throwing himself on his bed, he took Helen's photograph from his pocket and looked at the fair young face. His mind ran back to the day he first saw her moving like a summer sprite in the garden before her father's cottage. He recalled her every look and gesture. The sentiment that grew up in those days had ripened into a love, deep and strong. But how could

he meet her now? No moral law could hold him to the fraudulent marriage; he was sure of that. Miss Grush was a fugitive from justice and would probably never cross his path again. Yet his ring was on her finger, his name was signed to the marriage register. He turned the problem over and over in his mind as he had done so many times before in his lonely wanderings through the back country of Luzon. He might return to London and resume his rank and title, trusting to good luck and the help of his friends to make his way. But that would be going back to conditions that now seemed to him false and ridiculous. It would be a life of shams and shiftiness. The elixir of American democracy was in his blood, quickening and strengthening his ambition to win a place in the world by his own efforts. To give up his new life would be to confess himself a failure, to surrender the ideals of his manhood; and she—he looked longingly into the pure, honest eyes—she would despise him. No, he would be no penniless, fortune-hunting nobleman, no social wastrel. He might fail in his

desire to restore the fortunes of his impoverished life, but at least he would build up character and would live worthy of her.

The tropical twilight slowly died out of the purple sky, and the shadows deepened. The clatter of feet in the corridors and the tolling of bells warned him that the dinner hour was passing. Still he lay in the darkness with his thoughts. The next sun would bring her to him — and then?

CHAPTER X

A DISTANT crackle of infantry firing roused Hugh from his musings. He sat up on the edge of his bed and listened. The sound died out and there was a moment of silence followed by another crackling of far-away rifles, which deepened into volleying noises spreading around the city. A cannon boomed; then another and another. The evening air was filled with a clamor that slowly swelled into a sullen roar. The war had begun, and the Eastern and Western republics were grappled in an embrace of death.

Hurriedly changing his linen riding-dress for a suit of khaki, filling his canteen and loading his revolver, Hugh left his room, only to find the corridors of the hotel a scene of the wildest confusion. Officers were rushing hither and thither, calling in vain for the native servants, who had suddenly disappeared. The place resounded with oaths and the trampling of hurried feet. Dashing

down the stairway to the street, he saw officers flinging themselves on their horses and galloping furiously away. A platoon of soldiers crossed the square in front of the hotel at double quick, with an ambulance behind them. Mounted couriers swept along the streets in every direction.

He called to an artillery officer who had just leaped into his saddle.

"Hell's loose! They're fighting all along the line," cried the officer, hoarsely, as he spurred his horse and vanished in the darkness.

Now the guns of the warships in the bay began to flash and thunder. White glares from the naval search-lights moved across the sky. The rattling of infantry grew louder and fiercer.

The American forces lay in a great crescent around the landward side of Manila, facing the uncounted soldiery of Aguinaldo, which was apparently attacking the city at all points.

Hugh ran to the stable in the rear of the hotel, and finding no native to assist him, saddled his pony and rode at a dash to the palace of the military governor of the Philippines. That august person had been driven from his stately

halls by a body of native riflemen stationed in a swamp on the south side of the Pasig River and was holding court on the sidewalk in the midst of his staff. The American line had been attacked from one end to the other, and every courier arriving from the front reported that he had been shot at by natives from windows within the city.

"We have eight or nine thousand men in our trenches and the enemy has perhaps twenty thousand," said the general, in answer to Hugh's questions.

Away across the roof-tops, through an opening in the trees, Hugh saw an American flag shining out of the darkness in the brilliant ray of a searchlight, its colors rippling and tossing like a beautiful spirit of the air. His heart beat quickly.

"If you're short of men, I'd like to offer my services," he said.

The general stared at him in surprise.

"Any company commander can enroll you."

"I hadn't quite thought of enlisting."

"You're an Englishman?"

"I am, sir."

"Never saw it fail, major," muttered the general, turning to one of his staff. "A Britisher can't smell gunpowder without wanting to fight." Then, smiling at the tall young volunteer, he shook his white head. "I've no use for civilians just now," he said. "This is a time for soldiers. When you get ready to put on our uniform, Mr. Dorsay, step up to the nearest company headquarters and enlist. I'll give you plenty to do then. Meanwhile, you'd better keep to shelter. Both armies are standing to their trenches, and I don't see how there can be any advance until daybreak."

Hugh rode away with his head in a whirl. To see the closing in of the two forces, he must work his way to the front, and yet the man within him shrank from the part of a non-combatant. How could he, the descendant of a race of warriors, bear to stand among men in battle as a mere spectator? What man of the blood of Godfrey de Bouillon had ever looked upon the great game of life and death without arms in his hands? He heard the voices of the dead knights calling to him, and he saw their stern

faces looking forth from the walls of Battlecragie Castle.

Again he caught a glimpse of the American flag high in the night, with the glory of the search-light streaming through its folds and surrounding it like a nimbus.

A perspiring company of soldiers went marching swiftly toward the thunderous outskirts of the city, singing in the dust they made. A bullet whistled close to his head. The sound of artillery crashed louder, and the shrieking of the shells, hurled by the warships over the city, added to the appalling clamor that rose on every side. Rushing, noisy life swarmed in the narrow streets; galloping messengers; rocking, creaking carriages; troops of men running hither and thither; frightened merchants hurrying from shop to shop in search of news or safety; white-clad natives skulking timorously in the shadows, with fearful glances at the armed patrols; and in the middle of the noisiest, busiest scene, a rebellious water-buffalo lying down in harness and stubbornly resisting the goad of its driver.

Hugh's pony picked its way nimbly along the

street, while the rider watched the radiant flag soaring against the sky — emblem of civilization and humanity.

There was a time when that banner represented to him only the crushing force which had ruined him — the slowly spreading despotism of organized money, vulgar, boastful, and heartless. And now, as he rode through the tumultuous streets of Manila and listened to the iron voice of the great republic speaking to its new-found subjects, he remembered that rainy day in London when he learned that the American trust system had swept away his only means of support, compelling him to abandon rank, title, name, and country. There was no bitterness in his soul now. He could look at the stars and stripes with a fond impulse of loyalty. He had learned the lesson of human equality in its shadow. Nor could he forget that he was bound to that shimmering patch of color, flying so gallantly above the rifle-ringed city, by another tie — it was Helen's flag; and within a few hours he would see her in all her youth and beauty and innocence.

He made his way toward the northern side of

the city, intending to ride out to the front on the road leading to La Loma church, where the native army would be likely to offer fierce resistance. Only a few hours before, he had seen Aguinaldo's troops concentrating there; and it was somewhere in this general direction that the firing had begun, although no one seemed to know just how or why.

As he reached this highway, he met the division general and his staff galloping hotly forward. Hugh spurred his pony and swept on with the officers in a rush of hoofs and a cloud of dust.

"Hello, Dorsay!"

"Just in time!"

"Thought we'd see you!"

He waved his hand at each greeting shouted to him from the swift troop. Pressing his animal for speed, he reached the side of the commander.

"Our wires are cut and they're trying to assassinate our couriers in the streets," explained the general. "I'm moving out to get in touch with the firing line. You'll see some stiff fighting in the morning, Mr. Dorsay."

It was all so strong and manly and blood-

stirring, that splendid rush over the dry road into the dark gulf of war ripping and roaring in the night beyond them,—effete peace and caution left behind and nothing but the mystery and romance of glorious conflict in front. Hugh rose in his stirrups and shouted for the very joy of it. He felt a new power coming into his body and sniffed the air with a strange sense of pleasure. The thunderous noises, the lurid flashings, the faint smell of burning gunpowder, thrilled him. Bullets came “ting”-ing through the darkness from hidden marksmen. The shells from the fleet hurtled and screamed overhead. On, on, on they swept, riders and horses jostling each other, past houses and fields, under fragrant trees, leaping over heaped stones, scattering groups of terror-stricken natives to right and left, sweeping in confused curves around wagons in the road, breathing the honeyed scents of gardens,—clattering, clashing straight toward the battle line.

Then a halt so sudden that their ponies were thrown back upon their haunches. A rough cart filled with American soldiers accompanied by an officer was before them. It was a squad of

telegraph linemen belonging to the Signal Service.

"Cut the wires and connect me with the front," cried the general.

Two men, spurred with steel, leaped from the cart, climbed a telegraph pole, and severed the wires.

"We'll open headquarters here," said the commander, dismounting and taking possession of a house porch.

A telegraph instrument was carried from the cart, set on a chair, and connected with the wires. In a moment an army operator was clicking a message to the front. The general, lit a cigar and waited for the answer. Presently the instrument began to speak.

"The enemy are sticking to their trenches and firing steadily," said the general, as he read the despatch. "That's their Spanish training. Not much for you to write about yet, is there, Mr. Dorsay?"

Hugh was leaning on the back of the officer's chair, his blue eyes radiant with excitement and his nerves tingling.

"I'd like to ride on and see for myself," he said.

"Well spoken, sir," exclaimed the commander. "There's the road, and the whole island of Luzon lies before you. We shall stay here to-night and move forward as soon as there's light enough. If you prefer to feel your way to our trenches in the dark, you're welcome; but look out for native sharp-shooters along the road; several men have been killed to-night between the city and the firing line."

After a word of farewell, Hugh regained his saddle and started at a brisk trot for the trenches. He had not gone more than a thousand yards when the confidential hum of a bullet warned him that he had undertaken a perilous journey. Again and again the concealed marksman sent messengers of death singing through the gloom. The tough little pony began to snort and shiver. Hugh patted the animal's neck and found his hand covered with blood. The wounded pony broke into a gallop, shaking his head and uttering sounds of pain.

A loud cry for help caused Hugh to rein in

his steed. He could see several white figures struggling in the road just ahead, and his keen eyes caught the flash of a blade. Another appeal for help in an American voice came from the blurred group. Drawing his revolver, he rode straight on, to find a young officer fighting desperately in the clutch of natives. With a ringing cry he charged the group, firing as he advanced. A piercing scream and the lurching of a white figure to the ground followed the first shot. Slipping from his pony, he fired again and hurled himself among the natives, felling one with a blow and sending a bullet into another. The others fled into the bushes at the side of the road, and the officer fell heavily into the arms of his rescuer.

"I'm wounded," he groaned, "but I don't know how badly. Here, in the back,—it was a bolo thrust; and my head hurts—please let me lie down. They've taken my horse,—my God! just before my regiment goes into action, too."

Hugh carried the wounded man to the roadside, and lighting a small bull's-eye lantern which

hung on his saddle, he removed the officer's jacket and stanchd a deep wound in the back with a strip torn from the sleeve of his shirt. There was an ugly gash on the scalp, which he carefully bound.

The soldier was a singularly handsome man. The broad brow, regular features, big gray eyes, and pale, smooth hair reminded Hugh of some one he had seen before.

"Thank you," he said feebly, as Hugh washed the blood from his face. "They stretched a rope across the road and my horse was thrown. I was on my way to headquarters. You came just in time to save me. I'm Captain John Remington."

"I'm Hugh Dorsay."

The wounded man stared and tried to raise himself from the ground.

"Dorsay? Dorsay?" he gasped. "Not the young Englishman my sister wrote to me about — not the newspaper man?"

"What!" exclaimed Hugh, seizing the soldier's hand, "is this Jack Remington? Thank God forever for this night! Yes, I'm the poor

devil of a stranger to whom your family opened their door when I needed friends."

"You'll find a despatch for the division commander in my pocket there. It must be delivered at once. Leave me here and take the message back. You can send assistance to me."

"Damn the despatch!" answered Hugh. "I'll see to your safety first. How near are we to the firing line?"

"About a quarter of a mile; but never mind me now. Get the despatch in; it's terribly important. The colonel wouldn't trust an ordinary messenger."

"Do you think you could sit on my pony if I held you?"

"The despatch, the despatch!" moaned the officer.

"I'm not going to move a foot without you," said Hugh, firmly.

"I'm in your hands — I'm helpless — but my duty —"

"Your duty is to put your arms around my neck and hold on tight." And Hugh gathered the soldier up in a strong embrace. "There! steady

now — so ! ” And staggering into the road, he lifted his groaning burden to the back of the pony. Holding the swaying figure in the saddle, he drove the animal forward and walked beside it.

The heat and the effort to keep the swooning man from falling made him faint, but he struggled on, while the volleying of the armies shook the air. Across the open spaces to the right he could see flashing lines of rifle fire, and once he saw the belching flame of a cannon. Hoarse cries of command were borne to his ears from the distance. Somewhere ahead of him were marching men. He could hear their voices and the thud-thud of their feet. A riderless horse plunged by him. Then a quick, harsh challenge brought him to a standstill. He had reached the American line.

A few hurried words explained the situation. The wounded officer was carried to a small house in the garden, where a surgeon took charge of him ; the undelivered despatch was sent on to headquarters ; and after being assured that Captain Remington's injuries were not serious, Hugh mounted his pony and moved out to the firing line.

Tying his horse to a tree, he walked along the trenches and saw a continuous row of men in khaki lying against the low earthen breastworks and firing into the darkness. Through the drifting smoke — for the volunteer troops were using black powder — the officers strode up and down, peering out at the enemy's ground and giving their orders in quick, sharp sentences. As far as the eye could reach, the blazing front of the army stretched on either side. There was nothing to be seen of Aguinaldo's troops but the incessant flashing of their rifles. Now and then a rocket trailing in the sky or a flickering bonfire indicated that the native commanders were signalling orders.

A squad of ambulance men carried a blood-stained body on a stretcher into a tent. Hugh followed to the narrow entrance and saw a line of ghastly forms on the ground within. It was a scene of unspeakable horror. In the wavering, yellow lantern light two surgeons were busy with splints and bandages. An expressionless, stolid Chinaman stood by, holding a basin of water and a dripping sponge. Two silent, rigid shapes lay

in the corner of the tent under a covering of rough matting.

As his eyes became accustomed to the gusty light, he was surprised to see a woman in black kneeling beside a wounded soldier, holding a tin cup to his lips. He could hear her soft voice indistinctly as she reached her hand out and stroked the sick man's brow with a curious swaying of the thin shoulders that made him think of the night he was hypnotized and trapped into marriage with Miss Grush. How different this noble nurse from that evil adventuress, and how separate their fates! — one tenderly ministering to the dying in the presence of God and His angels, and the other cowering away from the pursuit of human justice. He found himself pitying the woman who had so deeply wronged him. In such a place there was no room in his heart for hate. The nurse seemed to be praying. Her hands were clasped and her head raised, although her face was turned away so that Hugh could not see it. The sufferer smiled, and made the sign of the cross with his hand.

"'Tain't no place fer a woman, sure," said a

broad-shouldered private in Hugh's ear, "but Miss Agnes goes everywhere."

"I've heard of her, but I never saw her before."

"She's just got over smallpox — caught it tendin' some of the boys in Cavite. What d'ye think of that fer a woman? Why, there ain't a durn regiment in the island that don't know Miss Agnes. She'd give her life fer the meanest cuss in the hull outfit, that's what."

How weirdly reminiscent that murmuring tone was, and how familiar the sidewise droop of the head and the sinuous turn of the meagre figure! The kneeling nurse leaned her face close to the stricken soldier, and Hugh had a momentary glimpse of her features in the shadow. His heart leaped, and a chill spread through his limbs. He looked eagerly at her hands — no, there was no ring there. But it was the face, the form, the voice, of Miss Grush.

He clutched the flap of the tent door and watched her as she smoothed the dank hair back from the rough face. Her every movement struck fear into him. Was this the sorceress who had wrung from him an oath of marriage? Could

that be the hand that struck down David Irkins ?

He forgot the thunder of the armies, the row of ashen, upturned faces, the voices of preparation for the coming battle, and saw only a lean woman on her knees, with a crucifix raised in her hand. His first impulse was to confront her, to denounce her, to demand the ring of Tancred which he had placed on her finger. Pshaw ! It was impossible ; there must be a mistake. That saintly, tender nurse — what could she have in common with a desperate criminal ? He would speak to her — not now, but when she rose.

“ Why, Dorsay ! ”

Lieutenant Perry slapped him on the back.

“ You’re right in the thick of it, my boy, and just in time to see the niggers drive in our outposts. See them coming ? ”

Hugh wheeled around and saw a band of dusty pickets leaping in over the earthworks, while a storm of bullets made the dust fly along the line. A cheer burst from the trenches, and volley after volley flamed out over the rough ridges against which the firing line lay.

“Down on your face, for your life!”

He threw himself flat on the ground. Then the whole American line rose in obedience to command and swept over the bulwark to drive the charging natives back. Hugh climbed up on the breastworks and saw the brown line go out into the darkness, shouting and firing as it advanced, only to return, after the enemy had fled, to take its place in the trenches again.

Then he went back to the tent and looked in. The nurse had vanished. No one could tell him where she had gone. Miss Agnes was a volunteer nurse who came and went on her own responsibility. Where did she live? Sometimes in one place and sometimes in another. She had been in the smallpox hospital for a long time and had but recently recovered. At one time she lived in the Dominican convent, but when the military governor declined to accept the nuns as army nurses, she had abandoned the shelter of their cloisters.

“Some say she’s American and others say she’s English,” said a soldier, “but she never talks about herself. One of the chaplains got a little

gay to-night about our boys bein' soldiers of God, or somethin' like that, and she told him we were makin' war on the only Christian people in Asia. Jee! you ought to have seen him shut up."

After visiting the improvised hospital where he had left Captain Remington, and learning that the wounded officer had been sent to the main hospital of Manila in an ambulance, Hugh accepted Lieutenant Perry's invitation to share his quarters, and in a few minutes he was stretched on a blanket in a little tent, listening to the never ending sound of the rifles in the trenches.

He closed his eyes, but haunting thoughts of the woman in black tortured him and drove away sleep. The suspicion that Miss Grush had followed him to the Philippines for some sinister purpose filled him with a nameless dread. He racked his tired brain to find some explanation of the mystery. Then the face of Helen Martin came before him, calm, sweet, and trustful. He might keep her in ignorance of his marriage to Miss Grush, but could he dare to live falsely in the presence of that pure nature? And if he told her all, would he not break the

tender charm of their companionship and darken all the future?

He tried to reason with himself. It was a fraudulent marriage; he had not spoken the fateful words or signed his name as a free moral agent; it was mere superstition and Quixotism to allow an involuntary contract to stand between him and his heart. The passion that had slept for months awoke, and his veins ran lightning. Love? Yes, it was love so deep and sure that life without it would be intolerable. The ship was even now, perhaps, outside of Manila Bay, waiting for the sunrise, and Helen was straining her eyes across the water to catch a sight of the harbor lights. Did she give a thought to him? Ah, he was sure that she had not forgotten those days and nights when the spirit of an unspoken tenderness brooded between them. What would she say if he told her now that somewhere there was a woman who called herself—by whatever shadowy title—his wife?

Through all these months of hardship and danger he had developed a larger capacity to feel as well as to endure. The boyish vanity

of birth and rank engendered by the narrow limits of his life in England had changed into pride of manhood, and with it had grown a virile love for the brown-eyed little American patriot that wove itself into every thought of the future. There were times when he believed that he had conquered his affection for Helen — days when he dreamed of going back to England — but as he lay on his rough bed and thought of to-morrow, he knew that he had been deceiving himself, and that his life and happiness were inseparably bound up in her smile or frown. If he were only free to seek his fate in her “yes” or “no” ! But how could a man of honor turn coward to his past ? His ring — the traditional emblem of his line — was on Miss Grush’s finger. He had put it there — fairly or foully — and until he recovered it and legally annulled the union it symbolized, he was bound to silence. There were instincts of mediæval ancestry that refused to die in him, heritages of superstitious chivalry compounded with his flesh and blood, as inseparable as the color of his eyes.

In time he fell asleep. When he awoke,

Perry was shaking him roughly, bugles were blowing, the ground shook to the tread of marching feet, and the first gray light of dawn was straggling in at the open end of the tent. The young lieutenant was in boisterous spirits, and capered about wildly.

“Get up and see the dandiest fight of your life,” he cried. “Dash some of this water over your head while I get you a cup of coffee and some hardtack. The whole line is being formed for an advance. It’s the prettiest sight you ever saw.” And while Hugh splashed the cold water in his face, his companion broke into song : —

“ Her golden hair with ringlets fair,
Her eyes like diamonds shining,
Her slender waist, with carriage chaste,
Might leave the swan repining.
Ye gods above, O, hear my prayer,
To my beauteous fair to bind me,
And send me safely back again
To the girl I left behind me.”

Looking out of the tent, Hugh saw the faint, saffron glow of the tropical daybreak stealing into

the haggard sky. There was a silvery mist on the rice fields, and the intense green of the trees and grass sparkled with dew. While he looked, a rosy flush spread upward from the dawning sun, with slowly changing tints of amethyst and gold, cloudless and serene. An iridescent dove fluttered down from the cool depths of a mango tree and preened its soft plumage in the shade of a bush of flaming scarlet. A sunbird flashed its lovely colors in the growing light.

The shrill, clear voice of the bugles thrilled the morning air, the sound of the tramping battalions increased; through the lofty screen that drooped about the tent could be seen the moving brown ranks and the gleam of arms; and beyond, the heaving streams of slouched hats and slanted rifle barrels, the tawny earthworks and the empty trenches. Save for a random shot here and there, the sounds of conflict had ceased. Both armies were making ready for the death grapple.

The colors were borne into sight, and as he saw the trembling folds of the American ensign unfurled for battle, Hugh's soul rose in salute. These were the dyes of the British flag in another

design, uttering a newer and broader message to the world. The course of civilization had run westward around the earth and this was the vanguard of mankind reappearing in the gray old East, still armed and still shedding blood in the name of human liberty. A prayer for victory rose involuntarily to his lips. Her flag! — had it not at last become his flag, too, unutterably beautiful and inspiring?

His reverie was broken by the lieutenant, who appeared with a can of smoking coffee and a pan of army rations.

“Die on a full stomach,” he roared. “In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility (that’s Shakespeare); but when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger, gobble the bacon, the hardtack and coffee, unleash the appetite — that’s not Shakespeare, but it’s good horse sense. By George, Dorsay!” — he paused midway in a draught of coffee — “I’ve heard the story of how you saved Captain Remington last night. It’s the talk of the whole brigade — and you never said a word to me about it. I’d give

ten years of my life to do such a thing and have the modesty to keep my mouth shut afterward.

“ ‘ Sound the clarion, fill the fife,
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.’ ”

I tell you, I believe half the fellows would resign their commissions but for the hope of getting their names in the newspapers some day — soak your hardtack in the coffee, my boy — and here you are a real hero — ”

“ Perry, I ought to be in the city to-day,” said Hugh. “ You know Miss Martin’s steamer is due, and if the enemy should break through our lines and enter Manila, they would burn and kill without mercy. Think of a young girl with no one to stand by her but an old man, who — ”

“ ‘ Oh, love, love, love !
Love is like a dizziness ;
It winna let a poor body
Gang about his biziness.’ ”

sang the officer, wagging his head and patting the ground with his feet.

“ Can’t you see,” he added, “ that the best way

to keep the niggers from getting at your friends is to stay out at the front and help us to chase them off the face of the earth?"

"You're right" — Hugh lifted his head proudly. "I don't know how I could have been such an ass as to forget myself. Perry, I'm going to enlist."

"Wha-a-at? Enlist? Come to me arms, me sojer boy."

"Hang it! Perry, don't make a fool of me — and you've spilt every drop of coffee. Yes, I mean it. I shall offer myself at once."

The blood of his crusading forefathers spoke in the set face and steady blue eyes.

"I'm not the first of my family to be a soldier," he said gravely; "and if I prove to be the last, it will be a fitting end to the race."

He spoke with a depth of feeling that checked his companion's frolicsome mood.

"That flag" — stretching his hand toward the trenches — "has been calling me for many days. I shall make my answer now."

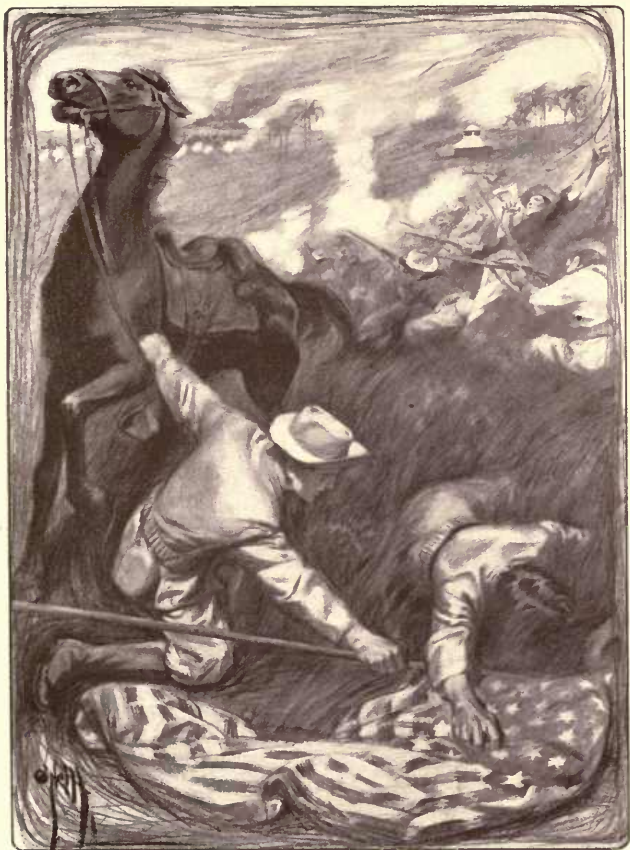
They left the tent together, and after Hugh had been duly examined by a surgeon and pro-

nounced sound, he took the soldier's oath and signed the muster-roll of Captain Remington's company. Ten minutes afterward he was promoted to be a sergeant, and later he was detached from his regiment and assigned to duty among the scouts at the headquarters of the division under direct orders from the general.

And when at last the battle opened, and the widespread lines, gathered from the farms and workshops and offices of the western world, lurched out against the insurgent sons of Asia, all through the red-blazing track of slaughter Hugh rode near the flag in a tempest of death, with as stout a heart as ever beat in the mailed breasts of his knightly ancestors. It was a day never to be forgotten in history, a day stained with the blood of two peoples calling upon God to witness the justice of their cause ; freeman slaying freeman, as when brothers strike each other in the dark. Over the fields and the roads strewn with the dead and dying, the American troops pressed their fierce way, carrying barricades, intrenchments, fortified houses, and fair groves filled with fighting men. The gray battle

mist drifted slowly in the swooning air across a vast spectacle of carnage, and the smoke of burning dwellings blackened the summer sky. The natives fought with desperate valor, and from the pale blue swarms of riflemen there issued maddened bands of bolo men, who fought with their rude blades against bristling ranks of bayonets, hacking and stabbing until they fell under the feet of the resistless American soldiery. Women and children joined in the dreadful conflict; flights of arrows and poisoned darts marked the presence of half-naked savages summoned from the distant mountains by native leaders. Gradually Aguinaldo's forces fell back, fiercely contesting every foot of ground, rallying behind groups of huts or around churches, firing from the shelter of gravestones in the cemeteries, but slowly retreating toward the green thickets of the outlying country.

Once, when a color-bearer was struck down, Hugh leaped from his saddle, and lifting the fallen stars and stripes from the dust, remounted and carried the flag forward amidst the cheers of his comrades. It gave him a thrill of mingled



*“LEAPED FROM HIS SADDLE, AND LIFTING THE
FALLEN STARS AND STRIPES . . .”*

pain and pleasure, for although he bore the colors to which he had sworn loyalty—and his pulse leaped at the thought that Helen would know of his deed—yet the Englishman was strong within him. Lion blood and eagle blood struggled for mastery in his veins. He was a soldier of the great republic, but still a subject of the British crown and heir to an ancient earldom. And while he moved onward through the smoking conflict, with the brilliant ensign trailing over him, traditions of the past and sentiments of the present gripped him inwardly.

All through the burning day Hugh carried the American colors, delivering them to their regiment when the field was won and the tired soldiers had manned a new line of trenches.

“And now, sir,” said the general, after complimenting the new-made sergeant on his gallantry, “you have my permission to go to the city and serve your newspaper. There will be no more fighting at present. The enemy has had a taste of American steel, and we shall give them a few days to think it over as a steady diet. You may remain in Manila for a day or two if you desire

it, sergeant. Under the circumstances it would be hardly fair to prevent you from doing your work as a correspondent. "Besides," — and the general prodded Hugh gently in the ribs, — "I hear that you have friends coming from Hong Kong to-day. Oh, well," — as the tall youth raised one hand in protest — "I was that way myself once. Damm it! I wouldn't give a rap for a fellow that didn't —"

"Thank you, I shall go at once," said Hugh, interrupting him. "There may be disorders in the city and I might be useful to my friends."

"Until further orders, you may remain with them. You've earned a rest, and besides, as I was saying, when a man's sweetheart comes eight thousand miles —"

Hugh saluted and fled, with the laughter of the general in his ears.

CHAPTER XI

AFTER cabling his story of the battle to New York, Hugh went to the wharf of the little Custom House on the Pasig River — which divides modern Manila from the moated walls and battlements of the close-built city reared by the Spanish conquerors — and waited for the arrival of Mr. Martin and his daughter. The Hong Kong steamer had entered the bay, but under the compulsion of naval regulations had anchored far out; and the passengers were to be brought ashore in a steam launch.

Although the distant, piled-up clouds still faintly shone with mottled reflections of the vanished sun and dyed the gloomy waste of the bay with shimmering streaks of copper and sulphurous green, the canal-like river looked ghostly in the growing dusk, with its crowded ships, roofed hulks and barges, shallops, junks, scows, and puffing launches, swarming with deck-life and

twinkling with lights. Grimy English colliers ground their sides against the painted hulls of Chinese smugglers; trim American merchantmen swung in the stream beside fantastic native fishing boats; Spanish freighters creaked against Malay prows and marvellously contrived rafts of bamboo.

Traders, adventurers, and ruffians from almost every corner of the earth were to be found in the babbling multitude that peopled the narrow stream, — Japanese, Chinamen, Hindoos, Tartars, South Americans, Australians, Hawaiians, Russians, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Austrians, Italians, Englishmen, Americans, and men of all the tribes of the Philippine Islands, noisy and picturesquely squalid.

Beyond the floating inferno that choked the mouth of the river and the neglected monument of Magellan on the opposite bank, rose the huge bulk of the Walled City, with hoary stone bulwarks and ancient fortifications; and above them, dimly seen, the triumphant stars and stripes. As the shadows deepened, the scene grew more mysterious in the yellow light of the myriad lan-

terns swinging among the rocking acres of craft, and the half-clad figures leaping from deck to deck looked like evil spirits.

There were smart officers to be seen on the river front and brawny sailors from the American fleet and the foreign warships, — all eager for news of the battle. Armed boats loaded with ammunition and other provisions of war moved to and from the wharves. Now and then a messenger from the admiral to the military governor leaped ashore and hurried away.

It was all so strange and homeless that Hugh's heart leaped when he saw the familiar slim figure of a girl in white, standing beside a sturdy, gray-haired man in the bow of a launch that swept through the labyrinth of shipping toward the Custom House wharf. There was no mistaking that airy form, high-held head, and jaunty hat with brim upcurling from the breeze made by the motion of the boat. Hugh waved his hand and shouted a welcome, but the noises of the river drowned his voice, and he was unrecognizable in the crowd that waited for the landing of the passengers.

As Helen stepped lightly to the wharf, her youthful beauty and grace attracted every eye, and a dozen hands were stretched out to assist her. Even the tired Chinese coolies, straining at the mooring ropes, turned to watch the lovely stranger. Her brown eyes searched the crowd anxiously, and then, as she saw Hugh, her face lit up with a smile that brought the color to his tanned face, and she reached out her hands to him with the simple honesty of a child.

"Hugh! how glad I am to see you! Here, father, don't you see Mr. Dorsay?"

He took her hands and held them for a moment, but utterance failed him.

"Bless my soul!" cried Mr. Martin, as he swung the young man around and examined him critically, "what a magnificent fellow you've got to be! You're as brown and tough as bronze."

"We've been in a state of wild excitement," exclaimed Helen, "and we've heard all about how you rescued Captain Remington from an ambush and how you raised the fallen colors and carried them all through the fight, and we're so proud—"

"I did 'nothing more than my duty."

"Daddy was for landing and going to the front to find you the moment we anchored ; but although they told us all about the fight, they wouldn't let us ashore until the order came from the Captain of the Port. Even then, they insisted that women were expected to remain aboard until all danger was over. Why, we would have swum ashore, if the launch hadn't taken us. Daddy felt sure that you would be waiting for us."

"That's right ; put it on me," said the old man, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes.

She lowered her eyes demurely, and a faint flush of wild rose answered the veteran's sly challenge.

"I've been thinking of you all day," said Hugh, bluntly.

"What ! even when you saved the flag ?"

"Yes, then more than ever." And, realizing that his words embarrassed her, he changed the subject abruptly. "We must get your baggage out of the hands of the customs officers," he said, "and then we'll go to the worst hotel in the whole world, where I've secured quarters for you."

"O dear! Must we really go to a hotel? I thought we'd live in a tent and be waked up by bugles every morning. It will be just like living in New York."

"No, I can guarantee a distinct change from anything you've ever experienced before. After a week in this hotel, you'll understand why a man is willing to face death cheerfully. Seriously, though," — Hugh's voice showed his anxiety, — "Manila is still a place of danger; and I'm sorry you've come at a time like this. We've driven back the native army on all sides, but there may be an uprising in the city any hour, and with nine-tenths of our troops out in the trenches, God knows what horrors we may have to encounter in the streets and houses. Centuries of oppression have made the natives as treacherous and cruel as wild beasts."

"I hope your fears may be unfounded," said Mr. Martin, solemnly; "but my daughter and I have come eight thousand miles to see where our flag has been raised, and, please God, we won't turn back now."

"There's the walled city, anyhow," said

Hugh. "If things grow desperate, I can get you shelter in the fort."

After a parley with the revenue officers, the trunks were slung on huge bamboo poles and carried off to the hotel by stalwart, bare-legged Chinamen, much to Helen's astonishment. The little party followed them in a native carriage.

"Thunderation! There's a man walking in a public street with his shirt outside of his trousers," cried Mr. Martin indignantly, as he caught sight of a jaunty native. "He ought to be arrested."

"That's the honest native style," said Hugh. "When a Filipino tucks his shirt in, he'll bear watching."

"It's a fool idea."

"On the contrary, the native custom is a sensible one in such a climate as this, and when a man changes from the habits of his people to please foreigners, he's apt to be a hypocrite. We consider the untrammelled shirt-hem as an emblem of moral integrity out here."

"Really!" exclaimed Helen. "And are we to see the embattled patriots advancing upon our army, flaunting their — Oh, it's unthinkable!"

"No, the enemy's as unromantically belted and uniformed as our own soldiers."

"It's hard to believe there's a war here," said the old man. "The streets are quiet, the wagons move along slowly, and the soldiers seem to be in no hurry."

"The wagons you see are ambulances filled with wounded men; those soldiers just ahead of us are a part of the city patrol (we have no police, you know); that big cart drawn by water-buffaloes is a sort of hearse, carrying our boys to their graves."

Mr. Martin uncovered his head.

"Poor fellows!" he muttered. "The whole archipelago isn't worth one of them."

"And you," said Helen, in a low voice, as she turned to the young soldier, "you have been in the midst of this scene of suffering and death."

"I did nothing more than my duty."

"Ah, no. These men were soldiers obeying the call of their country, while you —"

"I am a soldier, too."

"Hugh!"

"It's true."

“ But you’re not in uniform.”

“ I enlisted this morning and haven’t had time to bother about my clothes. I’m a sergeant, serving with the scouts at division headquarters, and to-morrow I’ll wear my buttons and chevrons.”

She uttered a little feminine cry of delight, and her eyes sparkled.

“ Then — then — oh, you’re an American citizen at last, Hugh ? ”

“ No, I’m still an Englishman.”

“ But you’ve taken the oath of allegiance ? ”

“ The soldier’s oath, not the citizen’s. There’s lion blood in me yet, although I’m bound to fight for the eagle.”

Silence fell between them for a space. The rickety vehicle rattled and swayed over the uneven streets, and presently it was brought to a standstill by a long procession of bare-footed natives, guarded by a few American soldiers.

“ Prisoners of war,” said Hugh.

The native driver in front of them watched the melancholy train — here and there a blood-stained coat or bandage — with cold eyes. His dark visage was expressionless, and he sat as still as

a wooden image while his captive countrymen shuffled on to the walled city.

"Our friend," said Mr. Martin, jerking his thumb toward the driver, "doesn't seem to be excited by the situation."

"It's hard to read these people," answered Hugh. "They seldom show emotion. I saw their soldiers die to-day without a sign of feeling, tearless and silent. Look at that chap's calm, indifferent face. The chances are that his heart is black with hate and that he'd like nothing better than to cut our throats. Do you smell the odor of the tree above us?"

"What a lovely perfume," exclaimed Helen. "It's like honeysuckle."

"That tree has no scent in the daytime. It gives out fragrance only in the dark. So it is with the people of the Philippines: they reveal their hearts when they are hidden from other races. To understand their natures, we must become like them or make them like ourselves; there's no middle course."

When they arrived at the hotel, there was an hour devoted to settling down. Helen was in

a flutter of excitement. Everything she saw aroused her interest,—the immensity of the rooms, the wonderful polished floors, the woven cane beds without mattresses, the bunches of sweet-smelling ylang-ylang, the barefooted native waiters, the melancholy groups of Spanish officers, the field-stained American officers, the restless and anxious war-correspondents ; and out in the plaza under her windows, the armed patrols and the clatter of the mounted couriers.

After dinner Mr. Martin smoked his cigar in the cool, wide corridor, while Helen and Hugh strolled up and down before him. The old journalist's kindly face wore an expression of deep satisfaction and pride, as he watched the young pair under the yellow radiance of the lamps. He marked the tender smile with which she watched the soldier's face when he spoke to her, and the fond, proud look in Hugh's eyes as he bent his head to hear her voice.

"Oh, I'm so, so glad you've made such a record, Hugh," she said. "Every one was talking about your brilliant despatches, when we left New York. And now that you're an American

soldier, somehow I feel that you're nearer to us."

"You always were such a little patriot. I half believe that if I'd been knocked out to-day —"

"No, no! don't even joke about that," she said with an effort to hide the tremor in her tone. "If you only knew how we suffered when we heard that you were in the thick of the fight, and how we prayed for your safety —"

"Do you know, Helen," — he hesitated and looked lovingly into the fair, upturned face, — "perhaps I oughtn't to say it — when I dismounted in the field and picked up the colors from the ground, the boys cheered, but I saw only your face and heard only your voice saying, 'It is my flag. Do this for me.' There, I'm sorry I said it, but, hang it all! I just couldn't keep it in."

Once more the pink of the wild rose flushed her face.

"You mustn't talk so," she said with a look of happiness that belied her words. "The eagle doesn't catch flies, and a soldier shouldn't stoop to flatter a silly girl."

"Nor does the eagle breed doves," he answered with a smile, "and I felt your spirit in the very air I breathed. Now I have offended you."

She half averted her face, and they moved without words for a few moments.

"I had hoped to find you inspired by the sentiment for which so many brave men died to-day," she began.

"And so I am." His voice was deep and true. "Every drop of blood in my veins is thrilled by the challenge of the United States to Asiatic barbarism; but I'm also inspired by the sentiment for which so many men have died in every country and every age—"

A sudden sense of guilt arrested his tongue, as he remembered his marriage to Miss Grush, and he drew back from the perilous verge of avowal.

"I think we'd better go to Mr. Martin," he said in a constrained manner. "He looks lonely, and the tobacco out here isn't all it's cracked up to be."

"It would be better," she answered.

Her feminine instinct perceived the change in his mood, and a subtle feeling of estrangement chilled her tone. They had reached an angle of the great corridor which ran around the building, and turned to go back.

"I suppose you've not changed your ideas about marrying an Englishman," he ventured with an unsuccessful attempt to laugh.

"The gulf is as deep and wide as ever," she answered gayly. "As you were saying of the Filipinos a little while ago, we must surrender to them or they must surrender to us; there's no middle course. And as I won't be a British subject, why, there's only one way. But I really haven't any interest in the matter, anyhow."

"We think we see into the looking-glass when, the truth is, the glass sees into us," observed Hugh, with a sigh.

"That's an owlsh remark, and sounds as if it ought to be very profound, Mr. Philosopher."

"I was thinking of myself. If my nationality were the only gulf that divided us —"

The note of despair in his speech caused her to look up quickly at the handsome brown face,

and something she saw there filled her with alarm. They were approaching Mr. Martin, but she stayed him with her hand.

"Hugh, you have some secret trouble," she murmured, looking into his face with the sweet seriousness of a privileged sister. "There has been a mystery in your life ever since the day Mr. Irkins was wounded. You're so changed; and have you ever stopped to think that it's nearly a year since I've had a letter from you? What is this thing that makes you turn cold and forget your friends? Can't you trust me?"

He listened to her with unquiet eyes and gloomy brow. Taking her hand in his, he pressed the little fingers and shook his head.

"Your father is beckoning," he said. "Let us go to him."

The color fled from her face, and she drew away from him with an offended air.

"I want to have a private chat with you, Hugh," said Mr. Martin, "unless you have to report for duty to-night."

"No, I have leave to stay with you for two

or three days, if nothing serious happens; and as the enemy has had a good thrashing, it's not likely that we shall be troubled for some time except by outbreaks in the city."

After bidding Helen good night, Hugh led the way to his room.

"I'm almost worn out," he said, as he threw himself into a chair. "Now that the excitement's over, I feel as weak as a kitten."

"I don't wonder," remarked the old man, "but you look as though you could stand anything. I never saw such a change in a man in my life."

"I got a ripping good story off to the paper to-day."

"Good! But how do you propose to do newspaper work in the future, with your duties as a soldier to attend to?"

"The general has promised to let me have plenty of time for that; besides, my understanding was that you were to take charge of the *Mail's* principal correspondence."

"Well, we'll have to work it out some way, my son."

Mr. Martin puffed his cigar slowly and studied the young man's face.

"I've something serious to say to you to-night," he said, reaching out his hand and laying it with a kindly touch on Hugh's knee. "I've had it in my mind all the way from New York."

He paused and puffed his cigar again in evident distress.

"Did you" — and he nodded his white head toward the door — "did you say anything to her to-night?"

"Why, of course I did," said Hugh, smiling in spite of the veteran's ominous manner.

"Yes, yes, — I don't mean that, Hugh; but did you — dammit! you know what I mean. Tell me the truth. My little girl looked unhappy just now." The journalist's voice shook.

"Mr. Martin, I understand you." The ring of his words was steady. "No, I said nothing. I know that you can't be blind to feelings which I'm not always able to conceal, but there are circumstances which prevent me as an honorable man from —"

The old man raised his hand for silence.

"She's all I have in the world," he said, as the tears gathered to his fine old eyes. "Just like her dear mother come back from heaven to comfort me. She wasn't made for sorrow, my son; and although she's been through college, she knows little of the seamy side of the world."

He laid his cigar down, and clasping his knees with his wrinkled hands, looked straight into Hugh's face.

"I've heard a story about you that has given me some sleepless nights. I can't believe it, and yet I must hear the denial from your own lips. As you hope for heaven, my boy, tell me the truth. No, don't look away; let me see your face. Have you a wife?"

"Before God, no; before man, I can't say."

Mr. Martin sank his face into his hands and groaned. His sturdy frame trembled.

"My God! and I never suspected you."

"I haven't spoken to Helen since the night it happened, until to-day. God be my witness, sir, that I've been the innocent victim of an adventuress I first met under your roof."

“Miss Grush? The hell cat!” The old man’s eyes grew stern. “So it was I heard it. And you—you, my boy. Oh, my poor little girl!”

Hugh experienced a bitter pang as he realized the confession of shattered hope in that broken cry. Never before had he understood how close he was to Mr. Martin’s heart; and the snowy head bowed in despair stirred a sense of profound misery in him.

Then a hot current of indignation ran riot. A thousand wild thoughts rushed in upon his brain. Why should he be condemned for playing the part of an honest man? What had he done to deserve this moral crucifixion? Ah! now he knew what love meant,—gnawing, torturing love. He would fling himself on his knees and tell the whole cruel story. No, he was guiltless—condemned without a hearing.

Mr. Martin raised his head. His face was seamed and puckered; there were dark hollows under his eyes, his mouth drooped pitifully, and his lips were ashen. All the strength seemed to have gone out of him.

"I haven't told her a word. She doesn't even suspect it. Oh, Hugh, my lad, this is a sore night for me."

"Mr. Martin," said Hugh, "it's all a horrible mistake."

The journalist shook his head sorrowfully.

"Too late, too late, my son."

"But you must hear me. I'm not what you think I am. My father's son can look any man in the face without fear or shame."

"It'll break her little heart when she hears it," muttered the old man.

"I'll tell you the whole truth, sir; and when I've finished, if you think I've flinched ever so little from the line of duty or honor, I'll go back to England by the next steamer, or as soon as I can get my discharge."

He was standing in the middle of the room, his hands on his hips, his head thrown back, and his clean-cut, brown features standing out in the lamplight like chiselled bronze. The veins in his sinewy neck strained like whipcords. A red blotch stained the breast of his jacket. Even the rough and wrinkled field costume could

not disguise the aristocratic lines of the tall, supple figure.

"I can't see how it will matter much now, my lad," said Mr. Martin, "but you can tell your tale in your own way. God knows I had hoped for something else in my old age. No, I can't believe you guilty of treachery, for even an Arab respects the house in which he eats salt. Go on."

The first words of the story of his marriage to Miss Grush in a hypnotic trance had scarcely crossed his lips when the sound of a rifle-shot in the plaza, followed by a death scream, interrupted him. The next moment a bullet crashed through the screen of the open window, and split a panel in the door leading to the corridor. The cracking and rip-ripping of rifles in the streets, the fierce, hoarse shouting of men, the trampling rush of feet across the plaza, and the wailing of some one in pain, caused the two men to run to the window. White figures were dashing in frantic confusion across the plaza, and groups of American soldiers were entering the open space from all the streets,

firing as they advanced. Windows and rooftops blazed with rifle fire. Some of the flying figures knelt, fired, and resumed their flight. The hotel was in a general uproar, soldiers and guests pouring out into the plaza.

“My God! the outbreak!” cried Hugh. “Run, run! Find Helen and stay with her till I come to you. Let no one enter your room. The native servants are not to be trusted; they’ll join with the enemy if the revolt spreads, and they’re sworn to kill every foreign man, woman, and child. Here!” — he thrust a revolver into Mr. Martin’s hand — “lock your door and defend it. We must get Helen into the walled city. The garrison will be turned out at once, but the outbreak may be general, and before relief can reach us the hotel may be fired. Baricade your door and don’t open it till you hear my voice.”

He spoke quickly, but with the authority of a man accustomed to action and to danger, fastening a belt of cartridges around his waist and blowing out the lamps in the room.

“Turn out your lights,” he exclaimed, as

he hurried the old man into the corridor. "If the hotel is attacked, the natives may think your room is vacant. Barricade the door with the bed and keep away from the windows. Make no sound till I come, and be dressed and ready to follow me."

A few minutes later Hugh knocked at Helen's door and announced his name. He found father and daughter arrayed for a journey, with a small handbag of clothing set on a table. The sounds of conflict in the plaza had died out, but distant echoes of musketry were still to be heard.

"It's the work of the Katipunan, the secret revolutionary society," he explained. "There are assassins in every window and on every rooftop. We must leave the hotel by the rear way."

Helen still wore the white dress in which she had reached Manila, and a misty scarf was draped about her head. Her face was pale, and her brown eyes flashed as she saw the belt of cartridges around his waist.

"I'm not a bit afraid," she said; "at least, not while you are with us."

His cold, formal manner puzzled her.

"You must cover yourself with something dark," he said, without noticing her impulsive tribute. "A white dress will be sure to draw fire from our men to-night; all the natives wear white. Here, this black rain cloak is just the thing." And he drew the garment about the slim form.

The distant attitude of respect assumed by the young soldier did not escape the mind of the watchful father, who recognized the delicate motive which prompted it, and, as they passed through the corridor, he pressed Hugh's hand gratefully. Descending a dark stairway and groping their way through an arched passage, they reached a narrow lane at the back of the hotel. At the corner stood a horse and carriage. After assisting his friends into the carriage, Hugh mounted the driver's seat. Turning the corner, he drew up in front of a stable. He leaped from the carriage, disappeared in the stable door, and presently returned with a horse, saddled, bridled, and haltered.

"I'll have to ask you to lead my horse," he said, giving the tail of the halter to Mr. Martin.

Then he remounted the seat, seized the reins, and the carriage rattled away through the unlighted back streets. At every corner they were challenged by sentries. Once a bullet whistled over them.

"Don't mind it," cried Hugh, looking back. "They're poor shots, even in daylight."

"Can't hear a bullet, anyhow, till it's passed," answered the old man, recovering his spirits under the influence of Hugh's calm voice. "Why, sis, this is quite romantic, isn't it? Where are we bound for, Hugh?"

"Fort Santiago, in the walled city."

"That sounds safe."

At that moment three white figures darted out of a doorway and ran into the street. One seized the rein of the carriage horse and the other two dashed at the carriage, with gleaming bolos upraised. Hugh whipped out his revolver and fired at the two ruffians. With a cry of pain one of them fled. The other bounded toward Hugh, screaming with rage, and aimed a blow that narrowly missed his head. He heard the sharp blade hiss as it descended. In another

moment the assassin lay motionless on the ground, with a bullet through his head. The third native uttered a shriek of terror and bounded away in the darkness.

“Lie down in the bottom of the carriage,” commanded Hugh; “there may be others.”

There was a rush of men toward them from the shadows just beyond, and Hugh raised his revolver.

“Don’t shoot!” cried a voice.

It was an American patrol. The soldiers pressed around the carriage, and when one of them recognized Hugh, he uttered a cheer and swung his hat above his head.

“Damned if it isn’t the Englishman who saved our colors to-day,” he shouted.

“Holy smoke! that was a corking good shot,” said a soldier, kneeling beside the dead native. “Square in the middle of the forehead. Went straight to hell without knowin’ what struck him.”

“I must move on; make way there!” cried Hugh. “I’m escorting this lady and gentleman to the walled city for safety.”

A cheer burst from the group of soldiers, as the carriage swept away in the shadows. Hugh felt his heart dance within him. He was knight to her at last.

Helen and her father had been silent all through the swift tragedy. The old man had his arm around the slight figure of his daughter. She was crying softly.

"There, there now. It's all over. No one's hurt but a miserable cutthroat who deserved what he got." Mr. Martin's voice was full of tenderness.

"Oh, daddy! thank God he's safe!"

Hugh heard, and his whole nature sang responsively.

"This is no time to thank you, Hugh," said the veteran, "and I don't believe I could tell you all I think, my son."

They swung into the brilliantly lighted Escolta, but none were to be seen save the patrols and sentries. Then came the Bridge of Spain, heavily defended at both ends; the bayonet-guarded gate of the walled city; the silent, narrow streets and ancient Spanish houses; the little park with its

cathedral, white palace, and monastery; a turn down a deserted street, a loud challenge and a quick answer from Hugh, a dash under a stone archway — and they were in the arsenal yard of Fort Santiago, the mightiest stronghold of the Spanish *conquistadors*.

The immensity of the walls, the heaps of abandoned cannon, and the vastness of the stone ramparts, seen obscurely in the gloom, gave a sinister appearance to the place.

As the carriage stopped under a huge tree in front of a small building, the door opened and a stout officer hailed the party, raising his hat when he recognized the presence of Helen.

“Hello; Dorsay!” he cried heartily. “They’ve been kicking up ructions in the city to-night, but we’ve got them under control.”

“Colonel Denby — Mr. Martin, Miss Martin,” said Hugh, as he assisted Helen out of the carriage.

“Delighted to meet you, I’m sure,” replied the officer, removing his hat. “These are the friends you spoke of?”

“Yes. Under the circumstances, I felt that the hotel would be unsafe to-night.”

"You showed good judgment, sir, and we have ample accommodations, rough as they are. Several of my officers are in the field and their quarters are vacant. If there is a safe place in the Philippines" — to Helen — "this is it. We've nothing here but some old guns and a few casemates filled with native prisoners. By the way, Dorsay, I hear that you've enlisted."

"It's true; I'm a sergeant."

"Then, sir," — with an air of mock severity, — "you will please bring your heels together, turn your toes out, and salute your superior officer in proper form."

Hugh saluted. The colonel returned the courtesy gravely.

"We've been attacked on the way over," said the young sergeant, "and I had to use my revolver. I'm afraid Miss Martin has been exhausted by the experience and needs rest."

"We owe our lives to Mr. Dorsay," said Helen, turning her sweet face toward Hugh.

"He's a lucky dog to have the chance of serving a charming American girl," growled the colonel, leading the way into his quarters. "The

rest of us have to face the music and trust to luck for our thanks. But I will say that he made a jim-dandy record in the fight this morning. Saved the colors, by thunder! An Englishman, too — what do you think of that?"

The garrulous old officer punched Hugh in the ribs.

"And now he has the cheek to intrude his services on one of our girls — allow me, Miss Martin."

He removed the rain cloak from her and she stood revealed in all her youth and loveliness, the crushed white gauze of her dress clinging to the slim, graceful form and the brown hair shaken loose about the pale, beautiful face. The colonel started back with a look of surprise and admiration.

"You are the real thing, sure enough," he exclaimed. "I'd almost forgotten what a beautiful American girl looked like. Excuse me for being so blunt. And you, sir, —" bowing to Mr. Martin, — "will pardon an old soldier for his plain speech; but this is — well, it's simply overpowering. Miss Martin, I'm the commanding

officer here, and so far as I'm concerned, you can own this fort."

They were taken upstairs, and the clack of the colonel's tongue was ceaseless, as he pointed out the bare mess hall and the officers' sleeping rooms, the walls of which were hung with strange weapons and flags, monstrous hats, buffalo horns, brilliant embroideries, and other trophies of the American occupation of Manila.

"This will be your room, Miss Martin," said the colonel, showing Helen into a small corner compartment. "The regular tenant was ordered to join his regiment, but he is now in the hospital. Mr. Dorsay might be able to tell you how it happened."

"Jack Remington!" exclaimed Hugh, pausing in front of a photograph.

"It's the captain's room, sir."

"How strange that I'm to have the room of the man whose life you preserved," murmured Helen, turning to Hugh.

"And here's a picture of his sister," he said. "I know her well. You remember the handsome blond girl I introduced you to on the golf links at Larchmont?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered with a darkening brow, as if the recollection afforded her no pleasure.

"Remington has had a bad turn, poor fellow," said the colonel. "That bolo thrust in the back went deeper than the surgeons thought at first."

A light step brushed the entrance to the room, and Lieutenant Perry, covered with dust, saluted the colonel.

"I've followed Dorsay over from the hotel," he said apologetically.

"What's up?" cried Hugh.

"You're to report at headquarters immediately. The enemy are pressing their lines in closer. I promised the general to pass the word to you. We may have a nasty fight before the night's over. The uprising in the city was a failure, but the niggers outside of the lines are getting sassy."

"I must leave at once," said Hugh. "Fortunately I brought my horse with me."

Perry saluted again, wheeled about, and disappeared.

"Mr. Martin, I feel sure that you are both in safe hands now. I'm needed at the front and must go without delay. If all goes well, I'll see you to-morrow or the next day. Meanwhile I ask you to trust me." He looked the old man straight in the eyes. "I promise that you shall know the truth."

"I believe you, my son."

Hugh turned to Helen. Her face was white and her eyes feverish.

"Oh, must you go?" she pleaded, her little head drooping sidewise, and her lip trembling. "It's so dangerous out there, and —"

"God keep you!" said Hugh, soberly, as he bowed to her with an air of restraint. His countenance was calm and his voice steady, but there was a mistiness in his blue eyes. "Colonel," — with a salute, — "I leave them in your care. Good night!"

Without another word he left the room. They saw him from the window as he swung himself into the saddle and galloped through the arched gateway.

"There's a man," said the colonel, "who's

likely to make a good American—if he doesn't get killed in the making. Why, Miss Martin, what's the matter?"

Helen had fainted in her father's arms.

"Poor little girl," said the old man, tremulously. "She's tired out—body, head, and heart."

CHAPTER XII

THE movements of the enemy which brought Hugh out to the firing line proved to be nothing more than feints by which the native commanders hoped to draw the Americans out of their trenches into an ambush ; but the scouts were kept busy stealing out here and there on the ground lying between the two armies, climbing trees and searching out the details of the insurgent positions. Hugh's courage and resourcefulness in reconnoitring made him a favorite among his comrades. Several times he barely escaped capture while seeking for weak points in the hostile lines. The general recognized his valor and intelligence by giving him command of the scouting force, a small body of men picked from the various regiments of the division.

The young scout's favorite resting-place was a little wooden platform lashed in the top of a

towering cocoanut palm and reached by a series of wooden cleats nailed to the smooth trunk of the tree. For hours he would remain in the airy lookout, under a dingy strip of canvas, scanning the insurgents through his field-glasses or jotting down notes of field news, which he managed to send regularly to Mr. Martin for use in his cable despatches to the *Mail*. He would watch the clouds drifting against the blue of the sky and the great shadows moving across the brilliant green landscape, and there would come a longing that would send his spirit ranging into the soundless space between heaven and earth. From his lonely post in the tree-top he could see beyond the checkered squares of rice paddy, the alternations of bush and hut, the crooked roads and the roof-tops shimmering in the heat, to the gloomy fortress which sheltered the dearest girl in all the world.

He might have obtained permission to go into the city, but instinct held him where he was. Once he caught a wonderful beetle that exhaled the perfume of a rose and sent it to Helen in a bottle, and the little note of thanks that came

back tempted him sorely to yield to his heart and visit her. Then the dark, lean face of Miss Grush rose before him in silent warning. Mr. Martin came to the firing line, but, seeing the old man in the distance, Hugh avoided him. In answer to repeated messages from father and daughter, complaining of his absence, he pleaded the urgency of his duty as a soldier.

Up in his aerial retreat Hugh fought over and over the battle of heart and conscience. He told himself that he was in no way bound to respect an obligation of marriage imposed by fraud. By working a hypnotic spell upon him, Miss Grush had relieved him of all responsibility for his subsequent words or acts. Her letter to him was a tacit acknowledgment that he was still free. Yet, argue as he would, he could not relieve himself of the feeling that, until he had cleared up the mystery of his sham wedding, he had no right to approach the sacred precincts of Helen's heart. He recalled the figure of Miss Grush, with his ring on her finger, and her words came back to him with torturing significance, "I've had you for my own for this hour at least."

He was sure that the woman he had seen in the hospital tent on the night of the battle was Miss Grush; but in spite of his efforts to find her, the nurse had disappeared. Not even the Dominican nuns knew where she might be found, and although Hugh enlisted the friendly influence of the surgeons, he failed to discover a trace of the soft-voiced "Miss Agnes." Once he thought he saw her through his field-glasses, standing near the door of his tent, but when he descended from his tree-top, she was gone.

"Sergeant," said the general, "I've a surprise in store for you."

Hugh saluted and waited expectantly.

"At my request the President has given you a lieutenant's commission. The announcement came by cable to-day. I congratulate you heartily, sir. No man has ever won a better right to wear an officer's sword."

"Thank you, general, but there surely must be some mistake. I'd be proud to hold a commission in the American army, but I'm still an Englishman."

“That’s all right, sir. You’re a lieutenant of volunteers, and your nationality has nothing to do with it. The Marquis of Lafayette was a major-general in Washington’s army, and still remained a Frenchman. Permit me to present you with a sword” — he handed Hugh a handsome blade — “that was worn by a man who loved our flag well enough to die for it. As the Spaniards say, may you never draw it without cause or sheathe it without honor.”

It was the afternoon of the fifth day of Hugh’s service as a scout. He hung his sword in his little tent and wandered out into a thick grove of bamboos and palms. As he left the camp, a courier from Manila handed him a letter bearing the London postmark, forwarded from New York, and addressed in his solicitor’s familiar handwriting. On reaching the shade of the trees he threw himself on the soft grass and tore the missive open. “Poor old Chadder,” he thought. “I wonder what he’d think, if he saw me in an American uniform?” The letter ran: —

“THE VISCOUNT DELAUNAY :—

“My Lord : The failing health of your noble grandfather, Lord Castlehurst, and the pernicious activity of the newspaper gossips, make it highly desirable that your lordship should return to England as soon as possible. The earl has not yet taken to bed, but he is confined to his room, being afflicted with rheumatism. The medical man is of opinion that his lordship may live for some years yet ; but the newspapers—according to their meddlesome habit—have taken it into their heads that the earl is *in extremis*, and there are frequent references to the succession. Already the radical journals have fallen into the practice of referring to your lordship as ‘the lost Lord Delaunay.’ I have done my utmost to prevent this, and have remonstrated with the editors, assuring them that your lordship is still travelling in Europe for your health’s sake ; however, they will insist on making a mystery of the matter. I shall continue under your lordship’s strict injunction to withhold all information regarding your present name or whereabouts, although—I take

the liberty to say—the time has come when you should take counsel with yourself as to the wisdom of abandoning the experiment of anonymous life in America and resuming the distinguished name and rank to which your birth entitles you.

“I note with some regret the views expressed in your lordship’s last letter touching the American theory of equal privileges, and can only hope that time and experience will convince you that government by the masses, unrestrained by the conservative influence of a cultivated and hereditary aristocracy, must, in time, destroy civilization and liberty. You are living in a country which is rapidly falling under the dominion of money, and as you must see upon reflection, conditions of equality cannot long endure in a people blinded by the mere instinct of acquisition.

“It occurs to me that the prospects of war in South Africa might persuade your lordship to return to London and apply for a commission in her Majesty’s army.

“With every wish for your continued health

and prosperity, I am your lordship's devoted and obedient servant,

“ALFRED CHADDER.”

Enclosed in the letter was a cutting from a prominent radical newspaper:—

“The mysterious disappearance of the Viscount Delaunay, heir to the venerable Earl of Castlehurst, is another illustration of the decay of our institutions. At a time when British trade and influence are staggering under the blows dealt by organized American capital, and when legislative means must soon be devised to meet the crushing competition which threatens the prosperity of the empire, this young man, who will one day sit in the House of Lords, vanishes from his native country. It is said that he is wandering about Europe under an assumed name in search of pleasure. How long will the good-natured British public consent to have its laws made by a hereditary legislative body—the only one in the world—whose members prepare themselves for the serious business of government in this manner? The missing Viscount is the last descendant of a famous line stretching back to the Conqueror. Is it possible that the rugged race that won these islands from barbarism is at last wearing out? Must we soon have to admit that England has become like ‘a sedge field, exhausted by excessive cultivation’?”

He folded the letter and stared through the darkness made by the trees. Beyond the gloomy

tangle of branch and vine, the distant sunshine sifted softly, like light in a mullioned window. A breeze stirred the palm trees overhead; a flying lizard leaped above his head and ran glowing to the end of a fluttering branch; a bird called tenderly to its mate; the faint notes of a bugle echoed in the air.

As his eyes became accustomed to the deep shade, Hugh was aware of a white figure leaning against a tree. Something in the graceful attitude made his blood run fast, and he rose to his feet. A peal of girlish laughter rang through the grove and Helen came tripping through the grass like a sylvan sprite, the incarnation of youth and innocence. He uttered a glad cry.

"Well, Lieutenant, I've been watching you for ever so long. I thought you'd never get through that letter."

"Lieutenant? Why, how did you know that? I only learned it myself a few minutes ago."

"It's gazetted in the Manila newspapers. Everybody knows it now. And daddy says you've been living in a tree, like a bird; and, oh," — she clapped her little hands, — "how well

you look in uniform! You know I haven't seen your sergeant's chevrons before. What a wonderful thing it must seem to be a real scout! I'm just dying to hear about it— But I forgot!" —she drew her slight figure up with an adorably graceful gesture—"you've turned away from your old friends, and I'm deeply offended."

"Helen!"

She colored before the yearning glance of, the steady blue eyes.

"I wouldn't have come here but for daddy; really, I wouldn't. I left him in the general's quarters and strolled out under the trees when —"

"When you heard I was here? Be honest!"

"Your modesty, sir, is —"

"Helen!"

His voice was low and deep.

"Hugh!"

He took her hands in his.

"I have waited so long," he said. "Even now I dare not speak."

She drew herself away from him shyly.

"I must go if you insist on talking like that," she said, with down-dropped eyes. "You know that daddy and I think the world of you and it isn't fair, after you've saved our lives, to take advantage of an accidental meeting; it was an accident" — his eyes were laughing — "and you needn't flatter yourself that I expected to find you here."

He slid into the grass at her feet and stretched out his sinewy form with boyish abandon.

"How beautiful this place is," he remarked irrelevantly.

She plucked a spray of scarlet blossoms that grew beside her and stripped the petals one by one.

"The whole world is beautiful, Hugh. It's just as we make it ourselves. We sometimes shut our natures up and complain that it's dark and lonely, when all the time the sun is shining and the birds are singing outside; but when we open the doors and windows we know that the light and beauty of heaven is to be had for the seeking. We don't even have to seek them always; they'll come if we only let them in."

"In my tree-top I've been seeing the world as I never saw it before."

"Ah, Hugh, the world looks different when you get high enough up to see it as it is."

"On each side of a beautiful landscape I've seen men with homes and wives and children, men who had no quarrel with each other—waiting and watching for a chance to kill."

"Why, what a gruesome turn!"

"This morning I saw a great bird soaring against the sun and then searching the earth for prey. I couldn't make out whether it was a vulture or an eagle—I don't even know if there are eagles in the Philippines. Wouldn't it be strange if the American eagle which has stretched its wings over these islands should turn out, after all, to be a vulture, tearing the vitals out of the only republic ever established in Asia?"

She made no answer, but stood stripping the scarlet blossoms and strewing them on the grass.

"The letter you saw me reading was from England," he said. "It reminds me that the country of my birth may soon need soldiers to fight for her; and the question is whether it is



“‘WOULD’ YOU BE SORRY IF I SHOULD RETURN
TO ENGLAND, HELEN?”

better to serve under the lion in Africa or under the eagle in the Philippines."

For a few moments there was silence. He watched the deepening shadows in her face.

"Would you be sorry if I should return to England, Helen? I'm a gentleman there by right of birth."

She hung her head. The flowers dropped from her hand.

"It's a question for your conscience," she said with an effort.

"Isn't it a question of patriotism?"

"Patriotism? Yes, but who can say what country he belongs to? Has the country of his nativity a better claim upon him than the country of his choice? You are an Englishman by the accident of birth; you couldn't help yourself, could you? And now, when America is calling the best blood of all countries to her — oh, Hugh, Hugh, can't you see that the hope of the world is in our flag?"

The long, clear call of a bugle sounded through the trees. It was repeated in varying cadences, now high, now low, and died away tremblingly.

“Do you understand the meaning of that call?” he asked.

She shook her head.

“It is assembling men for the game of life or death.”

“Is there to be another battle?”

“To-morrow the left wing of the division will swing forward until our line is straightened. We must press the enemy’s main force back. It will be rough work, Helen.”

“I tremble when I think of it.”

She was pale now. Her bosom heaved, and she drew her hands up with a little shiver. He noticed the movement, and the man within him rejoiced.

“Must you — must you go into the fight? Is there no service that calls for intelligence — you’re an officer now, Hugh — something that won’t expose you?”

“I’m not so sure that the safest place isn’t right in front,” he answered grimly. “The little beggars are such bad shots that a fellow in the rear is more likely to be hit than the one aimed at.”

He raised himself on one elbow and brushed the pale hair back from his bronzed forehead.

“Would you care very, very much, if anything should happen to me?”

“Can you ask me that?”

He saw the tears starting in her brown eyes and the insurgent pink in her dimpled cheeks.

“I think I’m just a little bit of a brute, Helen, but I — well, I wanted to hear you say it just that way.”

Again the bugle notes swelled through the air, this time with a quick lilt.

“No, you needn’t mind that one. It’s nothing more heroic than the dinner call.”

“Is it so late?” exclaimed Helen, noticing for the first time the low slant of the sun’s rays through the grove.

“Oh, there are two hours of good daylight yet and — by George! just the thing — won’t you stay and have a soldier’s dinner? We needn’t go to the mess tent; I can have a table carried under the trees.”

“I should be delighted. What a lark!”

“Roast beef from Australia, onions from Cali-

fornia, potatoes from Oregon, coffee from Java, and hardtack from I don't know where."

"Sumptuous!"

"And all served on tin dug from the mountains of South Dakota."

"Hurrah! There's daddy now, waving his hat at us, across the rice fields. Dear old daddy; doesn't he look funny with a revolver strapped to him? And he insists on wearing spurs, although he always rides in a hack."

"I've been looking everywhere for you, sis," panted Mr. Martin, as he reached the edge of the wood. "How do you do, Hugh? My congratulations on your promotion. My! but it's hot, and these blessed spurs catch in everything; got to wear them, you know — can't tell the moment I'll have to risk my neck on one of these native animals. War's war, and we must be prepared for anything. But how did you manage to stray out here, sis?"

"Why, daddy, you were so busy with the general that I rambled over to the shade, and to my surprise, who should I find here but our new officer."

"Um, I see," muttered her father, with a sly glance at the blushing face. "Very remarkable—very! Simply extraordinary!"

The old man seated himself on a fallen bamboo trunk and bared his head in the shade.

"Well," he exclaimed, "who'd have ever thought of seeing Uncle Sam's sword buckled on your thigh? Do you remember the night Helen sang 'The Sword of Bunker Hill' to you? Never saw a man look bluer than you did."

"You could hardly expect a fellow to feel cheerful over his country's defeat, could you?"

"Tut, tut, my boy! When any outsider talks to you about those days, just look him straight in the eye and tell him that Anglo-Saxons have never surrendered except to Anglo-Saxons."

"I never thought of it that way before," said Hugh, slowly.

"Of course you haven't. There are lots of things you haven't thought of. For instance, my son, it hasn't probably occurred to you that it's dinner time."

"Oh, yes, it has, daddy," cried Helen, triumphantly, slipping her little round arm about the

veteran's neck, "and we're invited to dine on real army rations ; and I've accepted."

"Good!" said Mr. Martin. "It'll be tough fare if it doesn't beat the eternal fried eggs of the hotel."

"But I thought you were both living in Fort Santiago?"

"We were, but we've gone back to the hotel. I couldn't think of intruding on the officers' mess after the danger was over. My only trouble now is with the army censor."

"Muttonhead!" observed Hugh.

"That's just it, my boy. I bang him in every despatch I send to the *Mail*."

"That'll make things worse, won't it?"

"Maybe yes, and maybe no. You see" — the old man cocked his head in a judicial attitude and pursed his lips — "I'm proceeding on an old theory. It's just this: If you see a horse, hit him on the nose. He may never love you, but he's always sure to be deeply interested in your movements. That isn't an original idea, but it's a mighty sensible one. I guess I'll get my despatches through all right in time. Just now I

have to send them by steamer to the cable office in Hong Kong. The military governor threatened to have me sent home, if I didn't change the tone of my articles."

"And what did you say to that?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing — just told him that home had no terrors for me. Neat, wasn't it?"

They walked through the crackling rice stubble, and Hugh laughed heartily at the old man's picturesque sallies against the military martinets of Manila. Presently they reached the young officer's tent, and Helen insisted on holding his sword in her hand. Then a rough table was set out under the wide-spreading branches of a mango tree, and the three sat down to a meal served from the mess tent.

The dying sun shed a ruddy glow over the scene, and a cool breeze from the west set the leaves rustling. Across the fields stood a row of white tents, rose-tinted in the radiance of sunset. An indescribable charm of color dwelt on tree and bush and meadow. They could hear the laughter of the soldiers, and the clanking of their tin cups and plates. Before the

repast was ended, the sun had set and the earth lay hushed in twilight under a sky of amethyst and gold. Suddenly they heard the sound of a man's voice singing high and clear:—

“ Abide with me, fast falls the eventide ;
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.”

They left the table and listened to the battle-eve hymn.

“ I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting ? Where, grave, thy victory ?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.”

“ It's Chaplain Gray, holding an open-air prayer meeting,” said Hugh. “ He believes that there's a time to pray as well as a time to fight.”

They strolled in the deepening shadows across the parched fields, and just beyond a screen of trees they came upon the soldier congregation, kneeling bareheaded in the grass, with the young chaplain in the midst, his hands locked, his handsome, spiritual face upturned, and his lips moving in prayer.

It was a scene of exquisite beauty and peace. The dying light fell on the rows of bowed heads, and shone in the face of the chaplain like a benediction. All was dusk, save where the reflected afterglow of sunset descended through an opening in the green branches. The strong, lithe bodies bent so humbly were motionless as stone images, and the voice of the chaplain was the only sound that disturbed the silence.

Instinctively Hugh took Helen's hand, and the young pair knelt at the foot of a tall bamboo. Mr. Martin followed their example.

"O Thou, who seest into the hearts of men," prayed the chaplain, "look into our hearts and banish anger and passion, that we may do Thy will even unto death in a righteous spirit. Make strong the hearts of our soldiers, O Christ, but keep them still merciful."

"Amen!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, fervently.

"Let no drop of blood be shed to-morrow, save for the sake of liberty."

"Amen!"

"God of the nations, waste not the lives of

Thy children. May freedom germinate in the battle-field and blossom and bear fruit."

"Amen!"

The chaplain arose and glanced smilingly toward the old journalist, whose hearty responses had caused several of the soldiers to turn their heads.

"Come forward, friends," he said.

The three moved out and stood among the soldiers, and presently they were singing with the rest:—

"Our fathers' God ! to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing:
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light ;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King."

By the time the benediction was given they were in darkness, and the sound of random firing announced that the enemy had begun the ordinary night's work.

As Hugh led his friends away from the prayer meeting, his keen eyes caught a glimpse of a woman in black, who rose from her knees and

glided toward a clump of trees. As she reached the edge of the deep shade, she appeared to turn and watch him. He recognized the catlike steps and alert poise of the head. Was it Miss Grush? His heart seemed to stop beating.

Without a word of explanation, he strode rapidly toward the mysterious figure, but, as he advanced, the stranger vanished into the gloom and he could find no sign of her. There could be no doubt that she had fled to avoid him. He searched among the trees and bushes and strained his eyes over the surrounding rice paddies in vain. The mystery maddened him. Once he thought he heard a mocking laugh in the darkness, but it proved to be the clucking of some bird disturbed by his movements.

"I thought I saw an old friend," he explained, when he returned to his companions and started them toward his tent.

"I could have sworn I saw a woman out there," said Mr. Martin.

Hugh was silent. Their way led them close to the trenches, through a lane of low tents crowded with soldiery, the officers' canvas being

set here and there beyond, under the trees, without any attempt at regularity. Companies of infantry moved quietly along the front like hundred-legged caterpillars; ammunition and commissary wagons rumbled in from the Manila road. They passed a small stone church set in the open country; a surgeon and his assistants were preparing bandages and litters on the doorstep. The starry glory of the sky and the tropical perfumes borne on the night air stirred Helen to an outburst of admiration. But the young officer spoke no word. Mr. Martin was also glum and averse to conversation.

When his tent was reached, Hugh lit a lantern.

"How pale you are!" cried Helen.

His face was drawn and his lips hard set.

"Look as if you'd seen a ghost," said the old man.

"It's nothing," said Hugh, turning to Helen with a faint smile. "You must expect to find a soldier serious before battle. You know we go into action to-morrow morning."

"That isn't it," she said gently, with a quick

glance from her brown eyes. "I know you well enough to understand that these sights and sounds of preparation only move your enthusiasm. You are ill."

"Would you mind waiting in here alone while I have a few words with your father? I must speak to him now and speak alone."

Mr. Martin raised his eyebrows and coughed in an embarrassed way. Helen clasped her little hands above her head and pouted.

"A secret?"

"Well, a sort of secret."

"Does it" — she smiled nervously — "does it concern me?"

"Oh, come now, sis," objected the veteran, "that isn't fair. Anyway, we've got to talk over arrangements for getting the news in from the front to-morrow."

"I wish I could tell you to-night, but I can't," said Hugh, earnestly, as he went out of the tent, followed by Mr. Martin.

The two men walked a short distance away from the camp without speaking, and then Hugh stopped and faced the old man.

"I'm sure I've seen her to-night," he said hoarsely.

"Miss Grush? No!"

"Yes, I can't be mistaken. It was she you saw in the edge of the woods. I've been trying to find her for a week. She was watching us to-night — I'm sure of it; and when I went after her, she disappeared as if the earth had swallowed her. My God! Mr. Martin, what shall I do? I promised to tell you everything, and yet I'm surrounded by a mystery I can't fathom. She has followed me here, and shadows my life like some evil spirit."

"Is she your wife, Hugh?" The old man laid his hand on his companion's shoulder. "Don't beat around the bush, my son."

They stared face to face in the darkness. Each could feel the trembling of the other.

"Before God, I am the victim of a cruel plot."

"Answer my question."

"I can't."

"Why?"

"Because I don't know."

Hugh felt the old man's hand gripping his shoulder fiercely.

“That’s not the answer of an honest man.”

“Listen, and you shall be the judge.”

In a few words Hugh told the story of his marriage to Miss Grush while in a hypnotic trance, the assault on David Irkins, the letter of the fugitive adventuress, and the scene in the hospital tent on the night of the battle. He told his tale bluntly, making no attempt to extenuate his own faults, and concealing only his rank and title. They walked back and forth on the edge of a rice field under a group of palms. Mr. Martin listened in silence.

“Thank God, my boy!” he said when the story was done. “I always believed in you, and you’ve taken a great weight off my heart. The thing now is to find that woman.”

“She has the heart of a fiend.”

“I don’t know. You can’t always tell about a woman. There never was one since the world began that hadn’t some goodness in her, if anybody knew just how to reach it. Of course that was no marriage, but it’s always better to untie a knot than to cut it. I tried to get Miss Grush’s story out of Mr. Irkins—he’s the only

one who knows it—but that blow on the head paralyzed his memory, and he couldn't recall anything about her."

"That explains why he has never referred to the assault in his letters to me."

"Exactly. His mind is a complete blank on some things. He insists that you saved his life, but he can't remember just how it was."

"And you trust me still, Mr. Martin?"

"Trust you? Why, my son, I'd trust you to the end of the earth. But not a word of this to my little girl;" he put his arm around Hugh's shoulders. "She mustn't know a thing about it till —"

"Till?"

"Oh, well, till you've got your ring back." And Mr. Martin laughed heartily.

"And then?"

"Now you're anticipating matters, my boy, but I've a good pair of eyes in my head, and perhaps I'm able to make a good guess at what'll happen — perhaps not."

On their way back to the tent they arranged a system for getting news of the coming battle to the cable office.

"We must get the story on the wire before the other fellows," said Mr. Martin. "News is only news when you're the first to print it; after that it's history."

"Why, you look like another man. What has happened?" exclaimed Helen when Hugh returned. "Your eyes are bright, and you have a color like a young girl."

"I've been making a confession."

"Why didn't you let me hear it?"

"My next confession shall be to you."

She blushed deeply and became instantly absorbed in the tent arrangements. Her father assumed a look of profound gravity, but there was a suspicious twinkle in his eyes.

A sound of some one running was followed by the appearance of Lieutenant Perry, who saluted and delivered himself excitedly:—

"The general presents his compliments and requests the presence of Lieutenant Dorsay at once."

Hugh returned the salute.

"It's a big chance, Dorsay. The niggers are trying to steal in on our left along the shore of

the bay, and you're to take a company of scouts and capture the whole outfit in the dark. Jerusalem, but you're in luck!"

"All right, Perry," said Hugh, quietly. "I'll be there in a minute." Then, turning to his guests, he said: "I'm sorry to leave you so abruptly, but there's not a moment to lose. I can't even see you on your way back to the city."

Helen grew white and her bosom heaved, but she picked up his sword with a smile.

"Let me buckle it on," she said.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but we don't wear swords in the field."

She looked at him mistily and smiled again. Her lip quivered.

"You're going into danger, Hugh?"

"Oh, a little swing around in the rear of the natives. It probably won't amount to much."

Her eyes grew big with horror.

"But if—" The slim white figure reeled and fell into Mr. Martin's arms.

"Go, go!" cried the old man. "By God! my son, you ought to be a good man to deserve a tribute like this."

CHAPTER XIII

A PLUNGE in the salt water of the bay and a frugal breakfast eaten with his tired scouts revived Hugh after his night pursuit of the elusive bands of natives and a dreamless sleep on the floor of a native hut.

Already long lines of troops were forming in the early light across the fields and gardens lying between the scattered houses. The general and his staff were seated on the edge of the dusty road to Caloocan, beside a battery of artillery. As Hugh strolled into the highway, he could hear the general speaking sharply to one of his aids.

"No, I can't permit it," he said. "It's too embarrassing. The firing line's no place for a woman. Every damned female in Manila seems to want to see the fight. As if we haven't trouble enough on our hands without having petticoats in the way! Tell her I won't have it; no, sir, I —

won't have it! Ah, good morning, Lieutenant Dorsay. That was great work last night. Fine, sir, fine — way, way up."

"Thank you, sir. I'm sorry I lost two of my men."

"Well, well," said the general, cheerfully, "you must avenge them to-day."

The aid whispered in the general's ear, whereat the officer grew red with anger.

"Not another word, sir," he roared. "If I catch her on the line to-day I'll —" he clenched his fist and struck his knee. "What do you think, Dorsay? Here's a woman who's been pestering me for leave to serve as a nurse on the firing line; won't take no for an answer. It's simply hell." And he mopped his perspiring face.

"Who is she?" asked Hugh.

"God only knows. Here, captain, order those wagons out of the road; dammit! man, can't you see there's no room for the guns to pass?" — and turning to Hugh again — "She's a volunteer nurse, an American, I think, who has done some brave work; but she will insist —"

“Not Miss Agnes?”

“That’s the woman — pock-marked, lean as a plank — most mysterious creature. Everybody seems to know her, but nobody knows who she is.”

“I think I know something of her,” said Hugh, guardedly. “I should like to take your message to her.”

“What! you too? I didn’t think it of you, lieutenant.”

“I’ve been trying to find her for a week.”

“No,” said the general, turning to his aid again, “tell her she must keep away from the line until the end of the action. Then she can report to the surgeons and pitch in. I’m sorry, Dorsay, but I can’t spare you just now. You must move your men into position at once. That swampy ground on the extreme left is just the place for your scouts. The tall grass will be full of nigger sharp-shooters.”

After a few words of instruction from the general, Hugh returned to his scouts. Everywhere squads of men in khaki moved toward their places. The brown lines of fighters be-

came more solid and rigid. Mounted messengers moved busily between the general and the line officers. The agile signal-service men were stringing telegraph wires from tree to tree, and a uniformed operator on the roadside was peacefully ticking off messages to the military governor's palace. In the corner of a meadow a grave-faced surgeon was drilling two Chinamen in the science of carrying a dead man in a litter, — the corpse being for the time represented by a laughing artilleryman, — and cursed them heartily for their awkwardness. A hungry cavalryman stealthily pursued an emaciated chicken, following the unwilling fowl beyond the trenches until a patter of bullets from the enemy's sharp-shooters compelled him to relinquish the chase.

Hugh was hailed with enthusiasm as he moved through the camp, for the young Englishman was already a hero to the private soldiers, and his graceful manners and frank character made him a favorite with the officers. He nodded in a friendly way to his old comrades in the ranks.

"Hold on, lieutenant," cried a panting voice behind him.

Hugh turned and saw the general's aid running toward him.

"I heard what you said over there," he exclaimed, as he reached Hugh, "and if you'd like to send a message to Miss Agnes, I'd be glad to oblige you."

"Thank you. Where is she?"

"In a native house on the road, about a quarter of a mile back."

"Tell her that I want to see her as soon as the fight's over. She'll find me at headquarters or with my men."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all; and yet, I wonder if any one is going into the city now."

"I'll be sending a messenger with despatches in a few minutes. Anything I can do for you?"

"I wish you'd get word to Mr. Martin, at the Hotel Oriente, that I want him to come out to me as soon as he can. It's tremendously important."

"Anything more?"

"Do you suppose I could get a few words through on the field wire?"

"The general is pretty strict about private messages on the military telegraph, but I guess I can manage it."

"It's awfully good of you."

Hugh drew a small pad of paper from his breast and wrote his message:—

"Robert Martin, Hotel Oriente, Manila:

"Miss Grush is out here. Come.

"HUGH DORSAY."

An hour later the cannon bellowed, the bugles rang shrilly, and the American line swept forward, with Hugh and his scouts dashing through the sour mud and razor-edged grass on the ditchy shore of the bay. The little brown men fought fiercely, but they drew back slowly before the terrific onset, while the lead-colored warships, steaming in the bay, raked their lines with bursting shells.

The thunder of the fight was music to Hugh. A thousand voices seemed to call to him from the air, as the storm of death swept around him. The blood of his furious ancestors turned to flame in his veins, and he bounded forward at the head of

his men with short, sharp cries of savage pleasure, his tall, lithe figure and aristocratic face stirring the scouts to a frenzy of enthusiasm. The volleying roar of the battle grew louder, and the explosion of shells shook the earth. The air vibrated with the tense humming of bullets. Once more the smoke of burning dwellings blackened the fair sky, and all the bloody horrors of war stained the rice fields and trampled gardens.

His heart swelled with a sudden accession of power, and a great light seemed to be shining within him, now fiercely white, now burning red. Ah! his crusading forefathers had gloriously confronted heathen steel and coats of mail, but they had never faced a hidden enemy using smokeless powder! He felt that he could trample the world beneath his feet, and he knew that something had taken place in his soul—he could never again know weakness.

There were hidden barricades in the foul mire, ditches filled with dusky riflemen, bands of sharp-shooters crouching in the dense, high grass; fierce swarms of bolo-men, slashing and stabbing even in their death agonies. He saw

dead men staring up hideously in the weeds, and he heard man call to man along the line, the rack-racking of the rifles, the bellowing of the batteries, the clear, high voice of the bugles, the hoarse cheering of the advancing soldiery — and he understood that he had risen out of centuries of impotency, and was kin to the knights who founded his line.

And when the struggle was over, when the pluck and brawn of the American troops had swept back the beaten regiments of the Filipino Republic, and the stars and stripes floated tranquilly above the battle-scarred Caloocan church — a telegraph instrument rattling on the ancient altar and a row of saddles on the chancel-rail — the roll-call of the scouts showed that Hugh was missing.

It was late in the afternoon. A careful search of the battle-field failed to discover any trace of the lost lieutenant. No one had seen him fall in the fight, and it seemed to be incredible that a man so strong and resolute could be taken prisoner and carried off by a flying enemy. There was great excitement at headquarters

when the scouts reported that Hugh could not be found. The general stormed and swore. New search-parties were ordered out. The military governor, on learning the facts, directed that, if the body were not discovered within a reasonable time, an officer with a flag of truce should go to the enemy's line and ask whether Lieutenant Dorsay were among the prisoners.

For hours Helen and her father—who had reached the front early in the day—hurried from officer to officer in search of news of the missing man. The old journalist grew haggard with anxiety, as he watched his daughter's bloodless face and hollow eyes. The officers shook their heads and turned away.

Then she went out into the swampy grass and wandered about, with a wild look in her white countenance, calling his name and listening to the echo of her own voice. Mr. Martin lost trace of her and waited in the road for her return. She roamed over the track beaten in the quaggy ground by the charging scouts, examining the shallow creeks, peering under the bushes and beating aside the sharp grass, until

her little hands bled and her filmy white dress was ragged. Her feet and ankles were stung and torn by hidden thorns.

At the edge of a scummy ditch she stumbled on a native corpse, gory and ghastly, the grinning mouth showing wolfish teeth, the eyes glaring, and the dead hands clutching at the air. Just beyond was the body of an American, face down, with a bolo sticking in the back. The marsh was strewn with empty cartridge shells. Here and there were canteens, bayonets, slouch hats, rifles, bolos, and other accoutrements dropped or thrown away in the fury of the fight.

Overhead the red and yellow butterflies sailed gayly to and fro, and the sunbirds flashed their iridescent beauty in the air. Still higher up, raw-necked vultures wheeled heavily against the blue sky.

Suddenly she came upon the figure of a woman in black stooping in the grass and dragging something. Moving closer, she saw that it was the body of a man in uniform. She recognized Hugh's yellow hair and pale face.

With a scream she bounded forward and knelt beside him. He was alive but unconscious. The breast of his jacket was stained with blood. Looking up, she saw Miss Grush's bony face. The cheeks were pitted and colorless. The dark eyes blazed with passion. A green crystal heart hung from her scrawny neck, and a brass crucifix swung at her belt.

"You!" cried Helen, starting back with an instinct of fear.

"Yes," hissed the thin lips. "Who has a better right than I?"

For an instant the two looked into each other's eyes.

"He's dying," moaned Helen.

Miss Grush's face changed to a look of cunning, and the anger left her voice.

"I found him in the bushes," she purred, with a catlike motion of her head. "He's shot through the breast, but he'll live. You, you"—she glanced sidewise at Helen, and her voice dropped to a drowsy whisper—"you love him?"

A look of unutterable affection was Helen's

only answer. She leaned over the prostrate figure and kissed the earth-stained brow.

"How dare you?" The dark face flushed with hate, and the black eyes glittered like a snake's.

"Hugh! Hugh! speak to me," wailed Helen, stroking his face.

With a shriek of rage Miss Grush thrust her back. Helen jumped to her feet and faced the adventuress. She looked like a young goddess as she stood before her assailant, her brown eyes shining with love and courage.

"Criminal!" she cried. "You were his evil spirit, and you shall not touch him again."

In a burst of fury Miss Grush leaped upon her rival and clutched the slender round throat with her lean hands. Helen fought with all her strength. Love filled her young body with power, and she struggled desperately.

The bony hands relaxed their grip, and Miss Grush began to weep.

"I was mad, mad!" she whined. "Forgive me, Helen, for God's sake. The whole world's against me. I've been hunted like a wild beast,

and now, now, to find him here—to see his blood—I don't know what I'm doing. Have pity on me!”

She covered her face with her hands.

“I'm sorry,” faltered Helen, her eyes filling with tears in spite of the jealousy that flamed in her breast. “But”—she threw herself on her knees beside Hugh—“we must save him. See, see! he is breathing.”

“Leave him to me,” said Miss Grush, in her softest tone. “I'm a trained nurse. Go, quick! get the ambulance. Every minute counts.”

Helen glanced at the fallen officer and hesitated. A prolonged groan issued from Hugh's lips. With a shudder she sped away through the tangled grass toward the road. Suddenly she stopped and listened. What was it? A sound of derisive laughter was in the air. In a few minutes the slim, graceful figure was flying breathlessly along the rough road, the brown hair fluttering loose and the dimpled cheeks rosy with excitement.

“Why, sis, what's happened? Where have you been? Look at your dress and your feet!”

"He's alive, thank God, daddy."

"What?"

"Shot through the breast. Oh, daddy, daddy!" She threw herself into the old man's arms like a child.

"There, there!" he crooned, patting her head.

"It'll all come out right. Where is he?"

"Out in the swamp with Miss Grush."

"That woman?"

"She found him in the bushes. Quick, daddy, we must get an ambulance. She'll take care of him till we get help."

"Ay, she's a nurse, — that's so," muttered Mr. Martin. Then, seeing the marks of Miss Grush's fingers on her white throat, his lip quivered. "What's that? — you're hurt."

"I caught my neck against a branch," she murmured, shrinking from a confession of the scene that provoked the assault.

"Heaven keep you from sorrow, my little girl," he said, with brimming eyes. "We'll save him from more than that bullet hole, please God! Keep a steady heart, for you'll need it. Come, hold my hand tight, sis."

It took but a few minutes to reach headquarters, and great was the joy of Hugh's comrades on learning that he was alive. A surgeon started out at once with an ambulance and a squad of litter-bearers, Helen and her father riding with them by permission of the general.

When they found the wounded man, it was twilight and the ambulance-men had to light their lanterns to avoid the treacherous mud-holes. Miss Grush had removed his jacket and bandaged the wound. As they came upon her, she was crouching in the grass and watching Hugh's wan face like some great cat.

The stricken soldier was placed on a litter and carried to the road. Helen walked beside him. Mr. Martin and Miss Grush followed. The old man eyed the adventuress wrathfully and tried to avoid her as they trudged through the bog, but she kept step with him in the waning light.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Martin?" she said at last, with a loud sigh.

"Know you?" There was anger and withering contempt in his tone. "I should say I do. So does he," and he pointed toward the swaying litter.

“Poor Hugh!” — she evaded the veteran’s mordant challenge — “he’ll be surprised when he knows whose hands raised him from death.”

Mr. Martin’s answer was an indignant snort.

“It isn’t the first time I’ve nursed him, and” — the threat in her soft voice was unmistakable — “it won’t be the last.”

“Woman, have you no fear of God or man?” he cried sternly. “You would have dragged him to hell but for —”

“But for what? You seem to know a good deal about my affairs, Mr. Martin; and since you know so much, you are certainly aware that I have rights —”

“Which you dare not claim. You forget that you’re not dealing with an inexperienced boy. He’s an officer now and has authority and influence. By heaven! he’ll make you rue the day you put yourself in his power.”

“You’re unmanly to take advantage of a helpless woman,” she murmured, with sudden meekness. “Has Mr. Irkins —”

“It’s a wonder God doesn’t wither the tongue in your head,” he interrupted harshly. “The

blow you struck paralyzed your victim, and he can't even remember your name."

Miss Grush halted and seized him by the arm.

"Do you mean that?" she screamed.

"From that day to this all memory of you has disappeared."

"But it will return some day?" Her voice trembled, and she gripped him until he roughly threw her off. "He will remember in time?"

"The doctors say he'll never recover his memory." Then, seeing the swift flash of triumph in her livid face—"damn you! I believe you're glad of it."

The drooping figure in black straightened up, and the thin face was held high. Mr. Martin's unconscious revelation of the fact that all danger of her first marriage being known was past, seemed to electrify her. Mr. Irkins knew of her convict husband, but if his mind were sealed against the past, he could not bear witness, and she was free to pursue her ambition.

"Why are you so bitter?" she pleaded, with a wheedling change of manner. "Mr. Irkins insulted me and I lost my temper. Have I

not suffered enough for that one mad blow? Do you blame me because in my loneliness and misery I have sought my husband?"

"He's no more your husband than I am."

The litter-bearers had reached the road, and Helen bent tenderly over Hugh as he was lifted into the ambulance. Miss Grush uttered an exclamation of anger.

"I don't want to be hard at a moment like this," said Mr. Martin, as he watched the cruel look in the adventuress's face and marked her clenched hands; "but if you utter one word of what you've said to me, I'll demand your arrest as a fugitive from justice."

She came closer to him and stared. His eyes were hard and his features set.

"You want to save her feelings?" She swayed her head with a curious feline movement and dropped her voice to a thin whisper, as she pointed to the sprite-like girl who fanned the wounded man's face.

He made no answer, but she caught the fleeting expression of fear in his gray eyes and smiled faintly.

"I'll wait," she said.

CHAPTER XIV

HUGH recovered from his wound, but his career as a soldier was ended. The bullet had destroyed an important muscle, and the surgeons declared that the injury would permanently unfit him for military service. It was also necessary that he should seek a northern climate if he would regain his strength. Declining the proposed retirement on half-pay, he resigned his commission.

The first dreary days of suffering in the hospital were brightened by Helen's visits, and as he became stronger, she was allowed to sit for hours at a time by his little iron cot. Her gentle presence refreshed and soothed him in the long, stagnant days. She decked his table with sweet-smelling flowers and fanned him in the breathless midday stretches. She brought him mangosteens from Singapore, strawberries from Hong Kong, and delicate persimmons from Japan. She read

the newspapers to him, and by a hundred arts beguiled his mind. And he watched her day by day, and thanked God that she was so beautiful and good.

Sometimes Captain Remington, who was now convalescent, would come to his bedside and sit there with Helen, and Hugh would have thrills of half-conscious jealousy, as he marked the fair young patriot's open admiration for the handsome officer. The captain seized every opportunity to be in her company, and he fell into the habit of bringing delicacies to Hugh for the sake of seeing her. And when he had a slight relapse, and Helen paid him a visit, Hugh felt sure that he had taken to his bed simply for the purpose of luring her tender ministrations to himself. But Hugh's bitterest pangs were when he heard her praise the captain as a gallant and loyal American, for then he dimly realized his own nationality as a burden.

There was no want of tender solicitude and sympathy on her part, but a subtle something hung between them like a veil. Mr. Martin had bluntly informed him of his conversation with

Miss Grush and had admitted that the situation was more complicated than he had supposed. It was plain that the old man was depressed by the mysterious threat of the adventuress. Hugh suspected that Helen's smiling evasions, by which she baffled every attempt at too intimate conversation, were due to her father's careful attitude.

All he could learn of Miss Grush was that she had called at the hospital several times to ask about his health, and that she had been seen in the neighborhood of the firing line occasionally. Her abode was unknown.

One evening as he lay alone, a rumor spread from bed to bed that Miss Agnes was visiting the wards. The fame of the heroic nurse had grown, and she was known to all. The strange atmosphere of secrecy which surrounded her identity and movements, and the mystic powers which she was said to possess, intensified the interest of the soldiers in her personality. She was known to have hypnotized a wounded teamster before a serious surgical operation, and there were some who claimed that she had restored a demented Dominican nun to her right mind by simply

stroking her head and talking to her. So there was a mild fever of excitement among the patients, when the presence of the famous Miss Agnes was announced.

When the door at the end of the ward opened, and a thin figure in black glided in, Hugh tingled with expectant emotion. He felt that she had come to see him, and he braced himself for the meeting. She wavered at the door for a moment, and her black eyes took a swift survey of the scene. As her glance met his she moved languidly toward him, and, kneeling at the foot of his bed, bowed her head as if in prayer. He could see the brazen crucifix and rosary in her hand, and he noticed the trembling of her meagre shoulders.

Then she raised her head and looked at him. Her features were wasted and ashen. The marks left by smallpox gave a grisly cast to her countenance. The mouth was straight and thin and hard, and the fine nostrils were distended. It was like a dead face; a stray lock of black hair lying against the hollow temple heightened the ghastly effect. Yet the

eyes were alive. They seemed to burn and flash as they sought his.

"Well?" he said coldly.

"I am lonely," she whispered in the purring tone he remembered so well.

"Why have you come here?"

"Because you are my husband. I followed you half around the world to be near you. I followed you till you fell."

The black eyes dilated. He felt her hand seeking his as she moved nearer on her knees, and he knew that she was concentrating her power in an effort to seize control of his mind again.

"Get up," he said. "You are attracting attention and making yourself ridiculous."

She rose and sat beside him without withdrawing her glance. The old gypsy look was in her face. He had a faint experience of the drowsy thrill that had once held his brain and will in thrall. She murmured softly, and tried to lay her hand upon his brow, but he drew away and frowned.

"No more of that," he said sharply. "I'm

too tough to be hypnotized again. You succeeded once because I was fool enough to trust you." Then, seeing the expression of saintly indignation with which she rolled her eyes upward, he laughed. "By thunder! if you weren't as deadly as poison, I could admire you. You're a wonder."

"No, no," she whispered passionately. "That's all done with. I've had my lesson. There was a time when the world seemed to be full of mysteries, when I lived day and night in the company of invisible spirits. The souls of all the millions who had died were around me and above me, and I sought to draw power from them. You never knew me as I really was in those days when we were companions in New York. I dared to seek the inmost secrets of God Himself, to wrest authority from heaven or hell that I might have my way in the world. I knelt before every altar, damned or blessed. The sight of blood on that terrible day" — she covered her face with her hands — "awoke me from moral death. I fled from justice, and I fled to our dear Lord Christ."

She raised the crucifix from her belt and pressed it to her lips.

"Don't blaspheme," said Hugh, unmoved. "Only stupid people do that, and I've never thought you stupid."

A shadow of admiration swept her thin face and left it tense and hard. Hugh winced as he raised himself on the pillow with an effort. The pain of the movement drove the blood from his face.

"Let me help you," she purred, half rising from her seat.

"Don't touch me, you devil!" he cried; and then, with a smile, he added, "That was bad form, wasn't it?"

"Lord Delaunay —"

"Drop that! Do you hear?" His face was red with anger, and his blue eyes flashed. "Repeat that name and I'll call the nurse and have you — Well," — his voice dropped — "I leave the rest to your imagination."

The meekness vanished from her face and was succeeded by a mocking sneer.

"Your manners haven't improved," she said.

"I see that you are still wearing my ring."

"I shall wear it till I die."

"Isn't it about time to end this farce? What have you to gain by it?"

She leaned toward him a countenance of fury.

"You shall not cast me off," she snarled.

"You may send me to prison, but I shall still remain your lawful wife."

"And you came here to tell me this?"

"I came to tell you that you cannot marry Helen Martin while I am alive. You needn't threaten me; I know the worst you can do, and I am prepared for it."

"What a magnificent figure you'd cut in hell, Miss Grush. You're certainly out of your element."

His eyes were steady and his voice clear.

"Do you know," he continued, "I've been thinking out why you came here to-day. It's because you're losing your courage. There never was a criminal that wasn't a coward at the bottom. You want to make your peace. It's incredible that a woman of your intelligence should walk into a trap with her eyes open

without having some idea of the way out. You are a fugitive from justice, and I am, or have been until this week, an officer in the army. The situation, to an imaginative person like yourself, needs no comment. Now, what do you want?"

"I want you."

"I'm flattered, but it's out of the question. Next?"

She turned her black eyes up until the whites showed, and her lips moved silently.

"You're taking some sort of an oath," he said calmly. "I wouldn't do that; you'll have to break it."

"What do you intend to do?" she murmured in a voice so gentle that he was startled.

"Do? I'm simply waiting for you. I'm waiting till you tire of this miserable game and openly confess the trick you played on me in New York the night you got that ring."

"And do you think anything can force me to do it?"

"Well, I don't know." He surveyed her gravely. "It's unsafe to bet on what you'll do."

You're really a wonderful creature, Miss Grush. No; I wouldn't hazard a guess. But" — and he flung the words at her in a burst of wrath — "I'll give you just four days in which to return my ring and confess your treacherous crime under oath."

"And if I refuse to allow you to abandon your lawful wife?"

"From what the doctor says I shall be strong enough then to give you my answer."

Without speaking she rose and glided away. He saw her kneeling at another bed, with the crucifix in her hand and a nunlike smile of tender pity on her upraised face.

"That woman," he remarked to the trim nurse who came to serve his medicine, "that woman is a" — he paused to select a strong enough word — "she's a peach."

"Indeed, she's a saint out of heaven if there ever was one," murmured the nurse. "It's hard for persons like us to understand such a nature."

"That's true," he sighed.

"And here's Miss Martin, bless her sweet face."

Helen came to the bedside, bringing the freshness of the outside world in her pink cheeks and smiling-brown eyes. She seemed the very spirit of health and happiness, and the morbid gloom of the place vanished before her springing step and honest, blooming face.

"You carry the sunshine with you," he said, as she laid a handful of loose roses on the table.

"Sunshine? I've just escaped a wetting. The sky is as black as ink and all jiggledy-joggledy with lightning. Look!"

Beyond the window they could see the white lightning stabbing through the murky clouds, and a tremendous crash of thunder shook the air. A powerful wind made the building vibrate. Again and again the lightning smote the sky dazzlingly. Then the rain fell straight and heavy. It was one of the tropical storms that sweep out of the sea without warning.

"Our boys in the field will get soaked, poor fellows."

"Always thinking of others, Hugh."

Her eyes ranged the white ward, and as she saw Miss Grush she started violently.

“That woman! Do you see?”

The lean black figure came gliding between the rows of beds toward the door, with a stealthy, sinuous grace, the narrow shoulders held high and the head bent low.

“Miss Grush,” muttered Hugh, between his teeth.

“Oh, Hugh, Hugh, if you only knew what a dangerous woman she is.” Helen shrank toward him with a little shiver. “She struck me the night we found you on the field. I believe she would have killed me if she could.”

“My God! I didn’t know that.”

As Miss Grush reached the door, she turned slowly and looked at Helen with a countenance diabolic in its malevolence. A flash of lightning shone for a moment on the sinister face and cruel eyes, showing the parted lips and clenched white teeth. A terrific peal of thunder — and she was gone.

“Do you know, Helen,” said Hugh, with a curious smile, “I can almost imagine I smell brimstone in the air. That exit was simply staggering. It beats anything in Milton or Drury

Lane. Don't! don't!" — the tears were shining in her eyes — "I'll be on my feet in four days, and I promise you she'll trouble us no more."

"ON BOARD THE STEAMSHIP 'WOON SUNG,'
"EN ROUTE TO HONG KONG.

"ROBERT MARTIN, ESQ.:—

"Dear Sir: A lingering remembrance of your former kindnesses persuades me, in spite of your recent brutality, to address this letter to you as I leave the Philippine Islands. Don't deceive yourself. I hold the proofs of my marriage, and I will establish my rights in spite of every obstacle. If you have any regard for your daughter's reputation, you will take her home at once. Nothing but shame and sorrow can come of her association with my husband, and I warn you that I shall spare no one in my effort to compel him to recognize his lawful wife. What do you know of Hugh Dorsay? What do you know of his history or his family? Nothing. And yet, in a matter that affects your daughter's honor, you have taken his bare

word against the written proofs of his marriage. Are you blind? Can't you see that after months of intimate association with me — culminating in our union — Mr. Dorsay took advantage of my unfortunate blow and my flight from the police to repudiate me, because of his mad infatuation for Miss Martin? Whatever my faults may be — and I'm not called upon to account for them to you — don't allow your prejudices to obscure facts.

“Hastily yours,

“BARBARA GRUSH.”

“We're going to leave for America on the next steamer.”

Hugh looked up from his bed at Mr. Martin with an expression of bewilderment.

“You're not in earnest?” he gasped.

The old journalist nodded his head and looked away. He made no attempt to conceal his emotion.

“I cabled to Irkins for permission to go back to New York, and the answer came an hour ago.”

"What's happened? I can hardly believe my ears."

"My health." The old man averted his face.

"Why, I never saw you looking so strong and well."

"I said — my health."

"For God's sake, Mr. Martin, tell me the truth. You're holding back something. That isn't the real reason."

"It'll do as well as any other for the present, my son. Do you understand me?"

"I think I do; and yet —" A flash of intelligence lit his eyes. "You've seen Miss Grush?"

"She's gone."

"What?" He shook like a man palsied.

"Gone to Hong Kong."

"You've heard from her?"

The venerable head nodded assent.

"Mr. Martin, have you lost faith in me?"

"No, my boy; when I lose faith in you, I'll trust no man alive. But, until this matter is straightened out, I must protect my little girl from the slightest risk of scandal. It isn't that

I doubt you, Hugh — you ought to know that — but this is a plain duty that I can't shirk. For the present we must go away. Do you understand now, my son?"

"I think I do," said Hugh, closing his eyes and sinking back on his pillow.

CHAPTER XV

THE fog that held London in afternoon darkness was thick enough to permit the Earl of Castlehurst to take tea at the front windows of his lodgings in narrow Jermyn Street, without having to bear the visual ordeal of the hairdresser's shop on the opposite side; and although the view of a scarlet sentry pacing before the time-blackened gate of St. James's Palace — a cheerful bit of color, to be seen on clear days beyond the jutting corner of St. James Street — was cut off, and the squawking of the adjoining bootmaker's parrot was a reminder of the plebeian elements in that region of needy British gentlemen struggling to maintain their dignity in the midst of obsessing tradesmen, still, there was a sort of privacy in the sooty haze, not unlike the solitude of rainy days at Battlecragie Castle — now, alas, the residence of an upstart manufacturer.

The earl was a sick man in a sick neighbor-

hood. Like Jermyn Street, he had seen nobler days, and, like Jermyn Street, he yielded grudgingly to changed times and conditions. There were traces of dingy grandeur in his three rooms, —dimly gilt chairs covered with well-worn brocades; quaint bits of old silver, bearing the Castlehurst arms; odd pieces of cut glass; a seven-branched candelabra; a few miniature portraits set in a honey-colored Sheraton cabinet; two fine paintings of former masters of Battlecragie Castle, in full armor; and a huge chest of carved black oak, studded with Gothic nail-heads. Yet the rooms were small, the carpets were threadbare, and there was a disquieting suggestion of distress in the faded wall-paper and grimy white woodwork. The wizened butler who had served the earl since boyhood, having followed the broken nobleman to Jermyn Street, was to be found in the dark and dilapidated hallway, clad in frayed livery and seated in an infirm chair, as proud and jealous of his position as if the smutty stubble of chimney-pots seen through the little back window were the tree-tops of his master's ancient woods.

There was no lack of fine carriages at the door and distinguished visitors, for the Castlehurst blood was spread through many counties; but the old earl fiercely declined pity in his poverty and drove his callers away, sometimes with sneers, and sometimes with curses. Toward his creditors he assumed an attitude of amused disdain. He never talked about business — that was a matter for solicitors and tradesmen. They might see Mr. Chadder and be damned to them. In reply to an offer of financial assistance from a grateful merchant whom he had once befriended, he wrote a curt letter of declination, saying that times had come to such a pass that a gentleman needed to be mortgaged up to the eyes to distinguish himself from shopkeepers.

As the proud old man sat by the window, wrapped in a gray dressing-gown and sipping tea from a cup of rare Chinese porcelain, his fine, slender hands and clean-cut face, puckered and cross-hatched by age, bespoke the inbred aristocrat. His eyes were blue and cold. The long, thin, high-bridged nose, the sharply up-

turned white mustache, and the heavy eyebrows, bristling outward, were signals of an irascible temperament.

On this particular day Lord Castlehurst was in an irritable mood. Under the pressure of sharp questioning, Mr. Chadder had confessed that the earl's defiant grandson and heir was living in the United States under an assumed name; nay, that he was an enthusiastic admirer of the Americans and had expressed advanced ideas about political and social equality. The solicitor had loyally refused to give any further details about Hugh, asserting that he was bound to silence by professional honor and the instructions of his young client.

The earl detested Americans. His one speech in the House of Lords had been a bitter denunciation of the Monroe Doctrine as "a piece of insolence worthy of a nation of vulgar ruffians"; and upon being called to order for his intemperate language by the Lord Chancellor, the enraged peer had stalked out of the chamber, never to return. When Lord Salisbury agreed to refer the Venezuelan boundary question to

arbitration in order to avoid hostilities with the United States, the earl had the Prime Minister's portrait hung in the Battlecragie stables. The American captains of industry were merely educated brigands, who would presently plunder the world unless they were destroyed by a European tariff league. His furious hatred of the United States was increased by the foreclosure sale of the South London Boot and Shoe Works to an American syndicate, whereby the last remnant of his once ample fortune — not to mention his grandson's moiety — was swept away.

The burst of anger which followed Mr. Chadder's revelation had frightened the honest solicitor, for the earl had had a slight stroke of paralysis only a month before. His lordship raved against Hugh for an hour and then fell into a senile sleep, from which he awoke to take tea at his front window and contemplate the all-pervading fog.

Having served his irate master with tea and a warmed-over muffin, the trusty butler had resumed his chair in the hallway, with a com-

fortable yawn, when the slender figure of a strange woman moved noiselessly up the narrow stairway and stood before him.

"You've mistook, ma'am," he said, with a majestic downward wave of the hand. "The apartments to let is downstairs—first floor, front; and gentlemen only."

The visitor was dressed in black and wore a thick veil. She carried a small leather bag in her gloved hand. A green crystal heart hung from her neck on a threadlike gold chain.

"I wish to see Lord Castlehurst." Her voice was low and the accent betrayed the American. Instantly the butler was on his feet.

"'Is lordship isn't receivin', ma'am."

"But I must see him." There was something insinuating in the tone. "Tell him a lady wishes to see him."

"It can't be done, ma'am," said the butler, haughtily. "'E wouldn't receive the Prince of Wales without a written happointment; no, nor the Sovering 'erself, 'e's that partic'ler."

She hesitated a moment, and he could feel her eyes looking at him through the dense veil.

"Tell him the Viscountess Delaunay desires to see him."

The man's jaw dropped and his eyes goggled.

"Very well, my lady," he gasped, bowing almost double and retreating into the earl's sitting room. A moment later the door opened, and she was ushered into Lord Castlehurst's presence.

"You will pardon me for not rising—I am an invalid—and for receiving you in this attire. Pray be seated."

The earl's voice was as cold as his eyes. He pushed the tea-table from him and drew himself up in the chair expectantly.

She lifted her veil, revealing a gaunt, white face, scarred by smallpox, and a pair of keen black eyes. With a slight inclination of the head, in acknowledgment of the old man's courtesy, she took the nearest seat and set the leather bag on the floor. She smiled timidly and showed her white teeth.

"Of course, my lord, this visit is a surprise to you."

"Nothing surprises me," said the peer, icily.

"To what am I indebted for your presence in my — my lodgings?"

"I am the Viscountess Delaunay, the wife of your grandson, and I naturally sought your lordship on my arrival in London. The wretched weather —"

"The weather? Ah, yes, we'll defer that subject," said the earl, with a polite shrug of the shoulders. "I had not heard of Lord Delaunay's marriage. You are an American?" His teeth came together with an ominous click.

"I am."

"A-a-ah!" His breath came quick and hard. There were bright patches in his withered cheeks. "And he sent you to me? Almighty God!"

"He has abandoned me. I have come to you for justice and protection."

"Abandoned you, has he?" cried the earl, in a sudden paroxysm of anger. "The dog! the ingrate! the renegade! He has made his bed, and, by heaven, he shall lie on it! We've had more than one misalliance in our house, but it's the first time an American —"

"You forget yourself, my lord. I'm a woman and entirely at your mercy."

"Your pardon, madam," he said, with a stately gesture.

"The fault is not mine," she began, in her peculiar soft voice.

"No, no," he exclaimed, with a cruel light in his blue eyes, as he struck the arm of his chair with his clenched hand. "Not yours, not yours! The, the" — his face purpled horribly, and he shook like a man in a fit — "the joke is on him. Ha, ha, ha! On him!" The harsh voice broke into a weak falsetto.

"I'm afraid you're not strong enough to bear my story," she suggested, with a wheedling look.

"I can bear anything," he answered proudly. He had recovered his calmness and was studying the shrewd, dark face. "First, your maiden name?"

"Barbara Grush."

"Your family?"

"I am an orphan, without brothers or sisters. I have been a trained nurse, and then a journalist."

"And Lord Delaunay has been —?"

"A journalist, my lord. We met professionally."

The earl uttered a half-suppressed groan, and passed his hand aimlessly across his wrinkled forehead.

"Are you quite, quite sure there has been no mistake, madam?"

"None whatever."

"And you expect me to take your simple word in a matter like this?" His thin little body was erect now and his face was alive with intelligence and suspicion. "Pardon me for pressing the point, but, although I do not know the habits of America, it is customary among civilized people to preserve proofs —"

"I'm fully prepared to satisfy your lordship." She drew the glove from her left hand and displayed the ancient ring given to her by Hugh in his hypnotic trance.

"I know it," he said weakly. "It is Tancred's ring. Two countesses of Castlehurst were married with that ring. It was taken from my grandmother's hand as she lay in her coffin. I wore it myself, as a boy."

She slipped the golden circle from her finger and held it out to him.

"Take it again and wear it, my lord."

He drew back with a frown.

"I couldn't touch it. Woman," — his voice rose in passion, — "you cannot understand."

For a space the earl stared vacantly at the ring. Then he roused himself with a feeble jerk of the head.

"Is that all?"

Without a word she opened the leather bag and handed him her wedding certificate and the marriage register book showing Hugh's signature.

"That's not his name."

"It's his handwriting."

"But not his name."

"It's the name by which he married me."

The earl lowered his head and peered sharply at her from under his bristling white eyebrows.

"How do you come in possession of this book?" he demanded. "It is an official record."

"The clergyman who married us is in London. He is at the door now, if your lordship wishes to see him. I did not dare to come alone."

She dropped her eyes coyly.

“Thompson!”

The butler opened the door.

“Did your lordship call?”

“Show Mr. —”

“The Reverend Mr. Frewen.”

“Show Mr. Frewen up. He’s at the door.”

His lordship eyed the clergyman with unconcealed disgust as he entered the room and stood forth in all his shabbiness, one shrivelled hand nervously covering the crooked mouth.

“Are you a regularly ordained clergyman?”

“I am, sir.”

“And did you marry the person whose name is written in this book to this per — this lady?”
He pointed to the lean figure in black.

“I did, sir. It was one of the most touching ceremonies of my long and varied —”

“You may go,” said the sick man, sternly, pointing to the door. “Thompson!”

“Yes, m’ lord.”

“Show this man out.”

As the little, bent figure shuffled out of the room under the withering eye of Thompson,

Lord Castlehurst turned quietly to the eager face of his visitor.

“Enough!” he exclaimed. “The Viscount Delaunay has made his choice in life and he shall stand by it.”

A gleam of triumph shone in her face for an instant.

“Of course you cannot expect me to show any enthusiasm in my welcome, Lady Delaunay,” he continued, “for, to be quite frank, I feel none. I have been estranged from my grandson for several years; and even were the case otherwise, I hold views which make this marriage a source of pain to me. However,” — he raised his hand to prevent her from speaking, — “we must make the most of an unpleasant and embarrassing situation. It shall not be said that I turned a Viscountess Delaunay from my door.”

“You are so kind,” she murmured, with a growing softness in her black eyes.

“No, I’m not kind,” he answered, with a touch of resentment. “Please make no mistake; I receive you and recognize you simply as a means of retribution; and unless I am a poor judge of

human character" — his lip curled contemptuously — "I can find no heavier punishment for Lord Delaunay than this. I hope I make my meaning quite clear."

In spite of his physical weakness and the senile lines about his mouth, there was an imperious irony in his manner that overawed her. Her thin lips moved, but no sound came from them.

"I shall do what I can to make your status as my grandson's wife valid," he went on, "but beyond that, you may expect nothing. I am too old and too infirm to present you at court ; still, in any case, her Majesty would not receive you for the first time in the absence of your husband."

The fog had lifted, and a beam of sunshine lay on the worn carpet at the old man's feet. A street piano, accompanied by two strident voices, broke the stillness : —

"Flow gently, sweet Afton, amang thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise ;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream."

"Thompson !" cried the earl.

The butler opened the door.

"Close the windows."

He pulled the windows down carefully, but still the sound persisted.

"Thompson!"

"Yes, m' lord."

"Do you remember that song at Battle-cragie?"

"Ay, that I do."

"Do you remember the boy who used to sing it to his mother?"

"Master Hugh—the viscount."

"Thompson,"—the earl's voice trembled slightly,— "this is his wife, the Viscountess Delaunay."

The butler made a deep bow to the stranger, and looked irresolutely at his master, as if awaiting instructions.

"That will do, Thompson."

"And now," said his lordship, as the door closed behind the bewildered Thompson, "a word about the relations which are to exist between us. There must be no familiarity on your part. I have, I hope, already made it plain that I accept you in order that my grand-

son shall not escape the consequences of his rash rebellion against my authority. I cannot disinherit him because the entire estate and its revenues, such as they may be, are in the hands of my creditors. The succession to my title is fixed by law, beyond my power to alter. But, if he has seen fit to abandon his country and name and marry out of his station in life — ”

“ Oh, my lord ! ”

“ And marry out of his station in life, I repeat, — then he must eat the bread of his own baking.”

His mood changed, and he laughed bitterly.

“ Fool ! fool ! fool ! ”

“ May I remind your lordship that the heir — ”

“ Is there a child ? ”

“ Not yet.” As she uttered the lying insinuation her face reddened.

“ And he knew this when he abandoned you ? ”

“ No, he was ignorant of my condition.”

“ There must be no scandal about the women

of my family," said the earl, with a show of feeling. "You are alone in London?"

She bowed her head.

"I will provide quarters for you in this house—a room or two—it is what you are accustomed to, I suppose?"

"I will be content with anything your lordship provides."

"An heir! Great God!" The earl stared at her helplessly, and then, with a look of rage that made her cower, he screamed: "Go! go! I can't stand it another moment. Thompson will see about the rooms. Go!"

Thus Miss Grush came to dwell in Jermyn Street, under the same roof that sheltered the broken Earl of Castlehurst. Her position was a difficult one, for his lordship, after the first interview, declined to receive her personally, and insisted on communicating with her through his faithful butler. In answer to her messages the earl sent word that the condition of his health would not permit him to endure any further excitement and for the present Thompson would attend to her wants. She bit her

lips and smiled. Within a few hours her black eyes and purring voice made the butler her slave. Under her subtle influence the naturally reticent and suspicious servitor became garrulous, and she was able to investigate her social bearings. She called at the London addresses of Lord Castlehurst's relatives, and left her cards, but the visits were not returned. Then she wrote a note to the *Morning Post*, and the result was a paragraph in that organ of fashionable intelligence announcing the arrival of the Viscountess Delaunay in town, and giving her number in Jermyn Street. After that a few cards were received from outside friends of the family. She eagerly returned the calls and was greeted with discouraging formality. She was an American, unfamiliar with the ways of her new acquaintances, — somewhat underbred, they thought, — and there was no common ground for intercourse between them.

On the fourth day after her conquest of Lord Castlehurst, Lady Laiksley, the earl's second cousin, called. She was a tall, stout woman with white hair, heavy, red face, loud, harsh voice, and a grenadier stride.

"My dear," she groaned, after kissing the thin, dark face. "I never could bear Americans, but for Hugh's sake, you know."

Her ladyship was brutally frank. She surveyed the lank American through her lorgnette, criticised her clothes, commented on her nasal accent, and laughed outright at her frequent utterance of "your ladyship."

"Don't say that, my dear—it's bad form; domestics use it, not persons of breeding. Of course you don't mind my setting you straight on these little points—they're so important here."

A dangerous light came into the black eyes. The worm was turning.

"You really won't be able to do anything socially till Hugh comes," continued Lady Laikley, unmindful of the warning scowl in her victim's face. "That sort of thing may be possible in America, but it's different in England, isn't it? We're such gossips and people jump at such conclusions, my dear."

The new "viscountess" drummed on the table with her fingers.

“Really, you’re not half so bad as I had supposed,” added her ladyship, coolly examining the American through her glasses.

“What did you expect?” snapped the white lips. “A woman in a blanket, with a ring in her nose?”

“I’m sure I don’t know, my dear. You see, we know so little about Americans here. I really believe” — the big gray eyes regarded her through the lorgnette with cynical curiosity — “you’re the first one I’ve spoken to. Well, I must be going. We must see something of you when Hugh comes; but for the present, the fact is, my dear, we’re seeing practically nobody.” And Lady Laiksley swept out of the room.

The next day the Countess Granbaire called — a quiet little old lady in prim black silk and Mechlin lace, who laughed softly and said all manner of pretty things and forgot to leave her card when she smilingly took her departure.

Then came Mr. Chadder, ponderous, grave, and practical. The sturdy solicitor was cautious at first, recognizing the subtle quality of the mysterious woman whose story had established her so soon in the confidence of the earl.

At first she evaded his questions, slipping from point to point with an easy elusion that baffled his blunter mind. She saw in him an enemy and concentrated her powers to defeat him. Mr. Chadder was professionally deferential in his manner. As Lord Delaunay's solicitor, he stood ready to serve my lady to the utmost of his powers, but—and the deep gray eyes searched her treacherous soul—the circumstances were so unusual. The viscount had not even hinted in his correspondence that he had taken upon himself the responsibilities of marriage. Of course it would be an easy thing to relieve my lady of embarrassment by cabling to his lordship, but—Then my lady put herself in her enemy's hands by admitting that Lord Delaunay denied the marriage.

“And now,” said Mr. Chadder, imperturbably, “perhaps you will explain how you happened to come into possession of the ring I see on your finger.”

She held her bony hand up with an air of triumph.

“It's the ring the great knight Tancred gave

to Lord Delaunay's ancestor at the siege of Jerusalem."

"Yes," said the solicitor, drawing his iron-bound spectacles out to the end of his powerful nose and examining the ring, "I'm quite familiar with its history. I'm curious to know how you got it."

"You must be very dense, sir."

"I confess, my lady, that I'm getting on in years," he exclaimed respectfully, "and an old man's mind is apt to grow dull." Mr. Chadder's mind might be dull, but his eyes were bright enough; they seemed suddenly to have become microscopes.

"My husband put it on my finger when we were married. It's my wedding ring."

"I happen to know that the ring was not in the Viscount Delaunay's possession when he went to America."

"Do you —" she began hotly. "Ah, well," — with an insolent smile, — "what does it matter? It must have been sent to him. There it is."

Mr. Chadder pushed his spectacles up on his

broad forehead and fixed his steady gaze upon the defiant black eyes.

"I saw Lord Delaunay throw that ring from the window of a railway carriage the day he sailed for New York," he persisted relentlessly

"Well, and what if you did? It was found by some friend and sent to New York."

The solicitor wetted his lips with his tongue and brought the tips of his thick fingers together. His manner was distinctly less respectful, and there was that in his keen gray eyes which drove the confident look from her face.

"That is impossible."

"You lack imagination," she remarked, stung out of her self-possession by his glacier-like steadiness of approach.

"True," he answered gravely, "but the fact is that no one in England, except myself, knew his assumed name or address."

"How dare you insinuate?" Her cunning had vanished. He could see the terror in her eyes.

"I dare do much in the service of a gentleman whose family I've served all the years of my

manhood. And now, madam," — he twisted his strong hands about one knee and watched her sternly from under his shaggy brows, — "we might as well understand each other at once. As you remarked a moment ago, I lack imagination, but I am fortunate in having some penetration, and I give you credit for possessing an unusual degree of intelligence. You must certainly see — you will excuse my directness, madam; we solicitors develop an unhappy plainness of speech — that this situation is becoming perilous." He pursed his lips and threw his head back.

"Perilous?" she repeated with a sneer. "Perilous for whom? I don't understand."

"For you, madam. The peril is imminent and real."

"You dull fool," she snarled. "If I were a man, I'd —"

"You'd have less imagination and more caution," interjected the stolid solicitor, without a trace of emotion. His coolness made her delirious with anger. "However," he rose and moved toward the door, "I see that you intend

to hold to this adventure (if I may call it by so mild a name) and I feel that I have said all that duty requires me to say for the present" — he paused thoughtfully — "yes, for the present. *Verbum sat* — pardon the Latin; it's another vice of solicitors." And he lumbered out of the door, making the floor creak beneath his weight as he went.

Mr. Chadder's subsequent interview with Lord Castlehurst availed little. The earl was in a bitter mood and resented the solicitor's patient championship of Hugh's cause. There is no corrosive like wounded egotism. It eats into the moral nature, corrupting its victim, destroying all sense of proportion, and blinding him to everything save his own passionate longing for reprisal. The imperious old man still remembered Hugh's boyish repudiation of his authority, and in spite of an inward agony that he could not hide from Mr. Chadder's experienced eyes, he cursed his heir as a renegade ripe for retribution.

"But, my lord," said the solicitor, "with a strong *prima facie* case against the woman, surely —"

“He shall stand by his bargain, Chadder. It’s none of my making.”

“Yes, yes, if there was a marriage, of course. In that case I should have nothing to say. But I’m convinced, my lord, that she’s an impostor. As I have already explained, the ring itself—”

“He hadn’t decency enough to leave that out of it,” cried the earl, bitterly.

“The ring itself, as I was saying, is to my mind a plain indication of fraud. It seems to me that your lordship has been somewhat hasty in accepting a perfect stranger as the Viscountess Delaunay. Her story—if I may say so without offence—is simply preposterous.”

“Damn it, Chadder!” roared the earl, “haven’t I told you that I saw the marriage register with my own eyes?—the clergyman, too,—I talked with him,—a vile-looking old hound, but still a clergyman.”

“You have not the slightest evidence, my lord, that either register or clergyman was genuine. And you have the admitted fact that Lord Delaunay denies the marriage. I have already cabled to him and am awaiting his answer.”

"Of course he'll deny it."

"My lord, have you ever known your grandson to tell a deliberate lie?"

"Probably not," said the earl, reluctantly. "He couldn't have my blood in his veins and be a liar, could he?"

"And you would condemn him without a hearing, this high-spirited youth, whose only fault is that he has inherited your own unbendable pride and impatience of control. Forgive me, my lord, if I go too far and overstep the bounds of my dutiful relationship to you, but what could you expect of a boy with such an inheritance?"

The strong, coarse face was full of tenderness, and the deep gray eyes shone with love and loyalty; but there was no sign of pity in the earl's blue eyes.

"He has borne his fate without a whimper."

"That's blood," muttered his lordship, with a faint quiver in his voice.

"Ay, it's his blood, my lord, your own blood, the last blood of your race. And now—he a mere youth and you a white-haired man—will you close your lonely heart to him?"

There were tears in the blue eyes now, and the fine, thin lips trembled. The old man struggled to master his feelings, but a sob broke in his throat.

"If he hadn't taken up with Americans, Chadder," he lamented, "I might have forgiven him. He looks like me, Chadder?"

"Your very likeness, sir."

"They're a race of vandals, Chadder," he screamed, with a wild look, "a mob, a rabble — the enemies of social order —"

"My lord, you are ill," exclaimed the solicitor, as the earl beat the air with his thin, white hands.

"The world is ill — ill unto death — poisoned with the doctrines of mobocracy. Our fogs, Chadder, are simply the vapors of the American Gulf Stream bearing down the smoke of our own chimneys to strangle us. Ill! ill! we're all ill."

A gray foam appeared on his lips, and he laughed shrilly.

"My poor little Hughey," he moaned. "How could I do it?"

Mr. Chadder left the room, and after instruct-

ing Thompson to look after his master, hurried away for a doctor.

Hardly had the sound of the solicitor's heavy footsteps died away on the stair when the new "viscountess" glided into the room.

"'E's took again," explained the butler, who was frantically chafing the unconscious earl's temples. "Never been so bad as this, my lady."

She passed her hand over the sunken features, drawing the finger tips caressingly across the wrinkled forehead. The earl ceased to tremble, and a sigh of content escaped from him. Thompson drew back and watched her while she leaned over the stricken peer, stroking his brow and muttering a curious purring sound. As she fondled the sick man her lean body swayed with a sinuous, snaky motion. Her eyes glowed like the eyes of an animal in the dark. The dark visage was alive with intelligence.

The earl coughed and opened his eyes, with a feeble yawn. He looked in a confused way at his nurse and seemed to be struggling against the command in her face. Gradually the firm

lines reappeared about his scornful mouth and his eyes grew bright and hard.

"Woman, I have something to say to you," he said weakly.

"Leave the room," she cried to the butler, who retired precipitately.

"Your lordship is not well." The bony hand reached out to stroke his forehead again, but he pushed it away wearily.

"What — what was it I wanted to say?" he demanded. "I — oh, yes," — his eyes grew piercingly bright and he tugged tremblingly at his white mustache, — "you forgot to tell me where you saw Lord Delaunay last."

"In Manila."

"Manila? So far away?" A tear rolled down the fine, proud face.

"I came all the way alone," she said, with a touch of self-pity in her tone.

"What was he doing in Manila?"

"He was a soldier, my lord."

"What?" he shrieked, with an angry glare.

"Not an —"

"Yes, my lord, an American soldier."

The earl struggled to his feet. His mouth foamed, and a ghastly grayness stole over his pinched features.

"The end," he gasped, with a strange whistling sound in his throat.

A senile smile came into the venerable face, the eyes grew dull, and with a lurch the earl fell back into his chair.

For an instant she bent her head down and listened at his bosom. Then, hearing footsteps at the door, she turned to meet the austere doctor.

"This, I assume, is Lady Delaunay?" he said, with a bow.

"No,"—there were wicked lightnings in her face,—“this is the Countess of Castlehurst.”

"The Countess of Castlehurst?" he stammered. "Surely, there is some mistake?"

"There is no mistake," she answered, pointing to the still, white face in the chair.

The frightened butler approached her.

"Thompson," she said, with a smile she could not repress, "say to all callers that Lady Castlehurst is not receiving to-day."

CHAPTER XVI

IT was arranged that Captain Jack Remington and Hugh should travel back to America together, and during the long voyage the two young men became firm friends. Before reaching San Francisco they had regained strength enough to take their daily deck exercise arm in arm. The captain was full of gratitude to his saviour, and honestly sought to increase the intimacy which had sprung up between them, baring his bosom to Hugh with a confidence begot of admiration and sympathy.

During one of their long talks—it was a moonlit evening—the captain confessed his love for Helen Martin, unknowing the pain he was inflicting upon his companion, and Hugh, looking out on the miles of silvered sea, was silent. But when Remington, in the fulness of his heart, added that his journey to New York was undertaken in the hope of winning Helen's

hand rather than in search of health, Hugh retired to his stateroom, there to lie sleeplessly for the rest of the night, cursing Miss Grush and torturing his soul with visions of Helen. He guarded the secret of his passion from his rival, and for the rest of the voyage listened to the captain's sentimental outbursts with a calm face that gave no hint of the inward heart-tempest.

They reached New York together and parted at the dock, each to pursue his path of love alone.

The staff of the *Mail* welcomed Hugh back with moderate cordiality, which presently developed into uproarious enthusiasm and a speechful banquet when it became known that Mr. Irkins, in an outburst of eccentric generosity, had presented the young Englishman with a one-fifth interest in the paper.

"I have no heirs," said Mr. Irkins, who was now an invalid and seldom left his room, "and you're just the sort of a fellow I'd have liked to have for a son. It will be an interesting thing to watch young blood work out in the manage-

ment of the *Mail*. You have the grit and tenacity I admire; besides, I don't believe you could be disloyal even if you tried. It isn't gratitude that moves me, although you did protect my life. I feel drawn to you, and I want to keep you near me."

The story of Hugh's gallantry in the Philippines was well known in New York, and he was mildly lionized. There was often a seat for him at the Remington dinner table, and Miss Remington was more archly coquettish than ever. The millionaire's attitude toward his guest was midway between hearty admiration and cynical condescension. Mrs. Remington encouraged the handsome, courtly visitor as a desirable bachelor whose good manners and innate distinction added a charm to her social plans, but she kept a more than ever jealous guard on his intercourse with her daughter. Her greenish hawk eyes were alert for signs of danger. Captain Remington's tales of his comrade's valor in the field were interminable.

Miss Remington's beauty grew with her years. The queenly head, crowned with pale gold, was

the harmonious corollary of a form endowed with Juno-like grace. Yet the gray eyes were less soft than before, the tenderly curved mouth was more disdainful, and there was a worldly expression in the fair face that puzzled Hugh. He found her more experienced and less frank. Her tongue was as sharp as her wit. She still talked to him of European castles and titles, but the girlish imagination, which saw knightly armor under the baggy tweeds of every English nobleman, had hardened to a calculating perception of the social value of rank. Feminine Quixotism, peopling the courts of Europe with romance and chivalry, had vanished. Miss Remington went the way of the world. Under her mother's relentless schooling she had learned to read Burke's "Peerage" as her father read the daily stock reports.

Notwithstanding the subtle atmosphere of selfish ambition which surrounded the stately heiress, Hugh found much to admire in her sparkling repartee and merry temperament. He bore with her father's sometimes too obvious spirit of patronage for the sake of hearing her clever

parodies and engaging in conversational bouts in which she gradually revealed her love of social glory.

The more he saw of Miss Remington, the more he loved Helen Martin. He rarely encountered the little patriot now. On the few occasions when they met, she seemed to avoid him, save in the presence of her father. His pride held him back; and although he sometimes felt as though he could no longer restrain himself and must gather her slight form into his arms, he maintained a consistent bearing of respectful friendship. Not that her eyes lacked the warm love-light, but there was an unspoken truce between them. Yet there were times when the ordeal of silence was almost too great for his strength.

Captain Remington devoted much of his time to the Martins, and took every occasion to press his attentions on Helen. Hugh saw and suffered, but gave no sign of his agony. But for an occasional glance of sympathy from her honest brown eyes, he might have broken down in his high resolution to refrain from approaching her

heart until the mystery of his hypnotic marriage to Miss Grush was cleared up.

Mr. Martin looked on and understood. He said little, but at critical moments a friendly hand-clap on Hugh's shoulder assured him of the old man's sympathy and confidence.

"The last mile's always the hardest, my son," he would say with a kindly smile.

Sometimes he was seized with a longing to return to England and visit the scenes and friends of his youth. Then the spirit of his adopted country would arise within and drive him into the crowded streets to wander about until his soul went forth in fellowship to the mighty forces of the life thronging about him. In these days he saw everything with new eyes. The great republic was simply the completion of the immense design which had been working out through history since the Dooms of Alfred, each succeeding age advancing,—the Magna Charta, the Mayflower compact, the Declaration of Independence. He could see them all now as parts of one majestic plan, stretching from century to century, and culminating on the

free continent reserved for the last stage of human emancipation. It was toward this supreme end that all his warrior ancestry had been unconsciously working, each seeing only the page opened in his own day. Here, at last, was a land in which all men were free to rise or fall according to their own worth, a nation built upon the solid rock of human equality.

The search for news of Miss Grush was kept up through all these days, but the most diligent investigation failed to yield any clew. It never occurred to Hugh's mind that the adventuress might go to England and attempt to steal into his grandfather's confidence under cover of the fraudulent marriage, and he failed to write Mr. Chadder any hint of his difficulties. Indeed, he had ceased to answer the solicitor's increasingly urgent appeals to return to London. Hugh's New York lawyer had examined the official record of Miss Grush's plot, and declared that, on the face of things, the wedding was in due form, although it would be possible, when the witnesses could be found, to have the contract annulled; meanwhile he must have patience and

wait — such a woman as Miss Grush would be bound to reveal herself in some way before long.

So things drifted along for weeks, and Hugh's sad face and musing air became a matter of gossip in the *Mail* office. He seemed suddenly to grow older. The doctor advised him to go abroad for his health, warning him that the habit of brooding melancholy might have serious consequences in his already weakened condition. Hugh shook his head and continued to pace the floor pensively.

“A fellow can't get away from sorrow by travelling,” he said. “If he has any real trouble, it's inside of him, and he can't get rid of it by moving from country to country. When he reaches the next port, he finds that the enemy he has been flying from is himself.”

Matters were in this way when, one evening, he was surprised to find himself seated opposite to Helen at dinner in the Remington house. She was lovelier than he had ever seen her before, although his quickened discernment brought him comfort in the discovery of a shadowy trouble in the sweet face and earnest brown eyes. Captain

Remington sat beside her, with an air of confident gallantry that sent devil-leaps through the helpless lover's veins. He watched the officer's tender looks and wondered why he had not let him die that terrible night in Manila. Miss Remington's seat was next to Hugh. It was evident that the heiress suspected her brother's passion for Helen, and she darted many a meaning glance at the radiant captain.

Mr. Martin, from his place beside the austere mistress of the house, observed the play of moral lightning that flashed between these three, and he labored prodigiously to divert their spirits by drawing Mr. Remington into a discussion of industrial concentration. The banker was in a heavy humor and responded loathly to the journalist's efforts to penetrate into the sacred arcana of finance.

"If I ever thought so, I have changed my mind," said Hugh, with heightened color, in answer to a whispered remark of Miss Remington.

"What was that?" asked the captain, looking across the table.

"I was saying to Mr. Dorsay that an hereditary aristocracy was the only possible means of preserving the refined instincts of civilization."

"Why, Fanny!" cried her brother, "where did an American girl ever get such an absurd idea?"

"I appeal to history," answered the heiress, with a toss of her shapely head.

"Take your own history," said Hugh, gravely. "Apply that reasoning to Washington and Lincoln."

"It isn't fair to drag politicians into the subject. We were talking of the social life of the world."

"I fail to recognize the moral agency of a title to-day."

"Perhaps if you had one —"

"Perhaps," answered Hugh, with a faint smile.

"That's just it," remarked Mrs. Remington, sourly.

"It's an anchor for society," said the heiress. "Something to hold to."

"When you get it," exclaimed the captain, with a wicked laugh at his sister.

"Jack!" Mrs. Remington's green eyes snapped. "I'm really surprised!"

"So am I," replied the officer, defiantly. "I'm surprised to hear the daughter of an American father and mother utter such sentiments."

"Tut! tut!" said Mr. Remington, testily. "Fanny's not so far out of the way."

"You too, father?" The captain laid down his knife and looked at his parent in astonishment.

"There's just as much sentiment on the one side as on the other," observed the banker. "Then there's the practical side," — he cleared his throat portentously, — "which appeals very strongly to me. I confess that I've held other views, but the truth is that a good European title carries with it an enormous social advantage, and" — with a gay nod toward his daughter — "I don't wonder that a sensible girl feels tempted by the substantial privileges of rank."

"There, now!" cried the heiress, triumphantly.

"Father, you amaze me," said the soldier. "You used to —"

"Yes, I used to think differently, Jack. I've changed my mind, that's all. Time has taught me a good many things. How many senators or representatives or governors of states are there who would care to hold office, if it wasn't for the titles? Fudge!" And the banker thrust out his heavy under lip contemptuously.

"And now I remember that Washington wanted to be called 'Your Highness,' but Congress refused to sanction it," said Miss Remington, shaking her head at Hugh.

"That was one of John Adams's lies," said Mr. Martin, sternly.

"And you, Miss Martin?" She turned appealingly to Helen, with a pretty droop of the blue eyes.

"I think American Citizen is the finest title in the world," answered the little beauty, quietly. "It's the one I should want my husband to wear."

Blue eyes looked into brown eyes steadily for a moment. It was a duel of temperaments. The blue eyes drooped.

"Magnificent!" cried the captain. "Just my sentiments."

Helen's face flushed at the silence which followed. Hugh caught a look from her honest eyes which quieted the jealous tumult in his breast.

"Mine, too," he said.

The color vanished from her cheeks. What did he mean?

"Of course American citizenship is honorable," said the heiress. "Perhaps you've misunderstood me. (Jack, I want you to stop laughing.) What I mean is, that there's a romance and sentiment about ancient titles which appeal to the social imagination. A noble family living up to its traditions is a conservator of civilization. We're all so practical and plain and uninteresting in America. There isn't a bit of romance about us. Rank, too, involves social leadership and social responsibility continued from generation to generation."

Helen looked across the roses, heaped in a silver bowl on the table, at the haughtily beautiful face and wonderful white throat, from which the shoulders sloped away in exquisite curves. Was ever anything more stately than this daughter of millions?

"And yet, Miss Remington," she said simply, "I'd rather be the wife of an American citizen than marry the subject or be the subject of any monarch in Europe. You mustn't think I don't appreciate the practical social value of titles; I've thought of the subject a good deal. But from a woman's standpoint, even if I had no other reason for my patriotism, I can't forget that, without the aid of titles, woman has reached her highest, noblest station in America. Here she is honored as nowhere else in the world."

Her face was glorified by emotion. There was inspiration in her soft eyes. Her bosom swelled, and the tints of the wild rose fluttered in her cheeks. Suddenly she realized that the diners had stopped eating and were listening intently.

"I'm afraid you'll think me a bluestocking," she added, with a little tremble in her voice.

"And are traditions of chivalry and romance nothing?" Miss Remington asked, with a politely checked yawn.

"They are very, very much," said the young

enthusiast. "But the present is better than the past, because it is our own; and there's nothing in the thousand years of feudal history so romantic or so chivalrous as the attitude of the American man to the American woman."

"Do you know, Fanny," said the captain, merrily, "I believe that you'd like to be a languishing lady in a rheumatic castle, with a husband in armor rattling around the country like a milk wagon."

"No, but I shouldn't mind being a duchess or a countess, with an automobile, a steam yacht, and a visiting list as long as the peerage. I'm distinctly modern in my tastes."

By a skilfully placed question, Mr. Martin drew his taciturn host into a grudging defence of industrial monopoly, and the dinner passed without further incident. During the evening in the drawing-room, Hugh was thrown much into the society of Miss Remington, while the captain devoted himself to Helen.

When at last the company broke up and Hugh was about to leave, Helen touched him gently on the arm.

"I hope you don't feel hurt," she said; and then, seeing that he misunderstood, she added, "I mean the conversation at dinner — perhaps I was carried away by my enthusiasm."

"I think you are the best and dearest girl in all the world, and —"

"Come, daddy, we must hurry," she called, blushing furiously and turning to her father.

That was a memorable night in Hugh's life. He went to the *Mail* office and tried to forget his passion in work, yet a girlish face and a pair of true brown eyes came between him and his manuscript. He sought refuge in sleep, but his soul was on fire. Daylight found him in the street with slow step and dreaming face. He strolled onward in the fresh morning air, taking no note of time or place until he found himself standing on the stone wall of Battery Park, looking out over the swift, rippling tide of New York Bay, the green shores of Staten Island and Bay Ridge showing dimly through the early mists, and the giant Statue of Liberty towering out of the shining flood in solitary majesty.

It was this scene that had greeted his eyes on his arrival in the new world, and conflicting emotions arose within him as he remembered the strange feeling of loneliness with which he first saw the ragged sky-line of the American metropolis looming beyond the fair waters.

He could never be lonely in America again. The sky, the trees, the tall buildings, the streets, the swift-walking, earnest pedestrians, all had a friendly, familiar look now. The flag fluttering so brightly in the new sunlight over the quaint little cheese-box fort on Governor's Island was the symbol of a people who dared to live largely. It had drawn twenty million recruits from Europe—more than the whole population of Great Britain when the battle of Waterloo was fought,—and even now he could see in the Narrows the smoke of steamers bearing new pilgrims from the old world to swell the forces of democracy. How good and pleasant it was!

The voice of his ancestry cried against the thought that slowly took shape in him. An American citizen? Why not? Why should

he cling to the empty honor of a title won by other men? What was there in England for him but a life of struggle to maintain a rank that had no root in his own worth? Yet it was a name gained bravely in the open field; it would stand while England stood. He recalled his gentle mother as he saw her last in the gardens of Battlecragie Castle. What would she say to him now? Would she not bid him be a man and strive for manly things in spite of all?—of that he was sure. To be an American citizen was to fulfil the unwritten thought of English history, to serve the cause of man, which was more sacred than the interest of monarchs.

The face of his queen came before him,—honest, kindly, worn with years; his eyes grew dim, and there was a lump in his throat. Could he forswear his venerable sovereign, the pattern of blameless womanhood, whose gentle hands had been laid upon his childish head in blessing?

Out of the darkness of his soul rose the image of Helen, appealing to his pride of manhood against his pride of birth. He seemed to see

her again as she said: "American Citizen is the finest title in the world. It's the one I should want my husband to wear." Dear little patriot! She little dreamed what her words meant to him or how she would set the tempest raging in his bosom. How could she know that her heart's captive was the heir of warrior lords? The strength of his love and his youth swelled in him. Yes, she would understand what it cost him to renounce his country and rank, she would know the victory he had won over himself. He would go to her as a man, wearing only the honors he had won in his own right.

It was a long and bitter moral struggle, but when he reached his lawyer's office there was peace in his blue eyes and a smile on his lips.

"The thing is perfectly feasible," said the lawyer. "Your service in the United States army gives you the right to become a citizen at once. Ordinarily an alien must wait five years for full citizenship; but in your case, being an honorably discharged soldier and having lived in New York for a year, a simple petition to the court reciting the facts will be

sufficient. Of course you will have to renounce your title as well as your nationality."

"I quite understand that," said Hugh.

"It is an extraordinary case, sir; the first of its kind, if my memory serves me right."

"There's Lord Fairfax."

"True; but he has not renounced his baronage, he simply lives here. Besides, he was born in the United States."

"And I am to be reborn here."

"This will possibly affect your rights as heir to the estate. Perhaps it would be better to delay action until I can consult your London solicitor."

"The estate is in the hands of strangers, mortgaged beyond recovery. It will never pay the interest on the family debts. I have nothing to renounce but my rank and my nationality."

"Does your lordship —"

"I prefer to be known as Mr. Dorsay."

"Ah, yes, precisely — I understand. Do you desire me to prepare the papers at once, Mr. Dorsay?"

"At once."

That afternoon Hugh sought out Mr. Martin at his desk in the *Mail* office. The old man's head was surrounded by its customary cloud of tobacco smoke, and the kindly face was bent over the slow-moving pencil. In a few simple words Hugh announced his intention to become a citizen and invited Mr. Martin to be present in the court.

"Praise God! I'll be there," said the veteran, heartily. "You'll never regret it, my son."

"And Helen?" said Hugh. "Do you think she'd come?"

"Well, now—" He paused and looked sharply at the eager face. "I shouldn't wonder if she would. But, remember—"

"I remember everything, Mr. Martin, everything. Her honor and happiness are no dearer to you than they are to me."

"Any news of Miss Grush?"

"None," said Hugh, sadly. "We've searched everywhere. My lawyer is now on the track of the clergyman who was her confederate. He went to England a little while ago."

"Um, I see." Mr. Martin puffed at his

pipe thoughtfully. "Ever strike you that she might have gone to England?"

"No. Still, perhaps —"

"Got relatives there, haven't you?"

A sudden light flashed in Hugh's eyes.

"By heaven! I never thought of it. And yet, she wouldn't dare —"

"Dare?" The old man blew a swirl of smoke straight out before him. "That kind of a woman would trail through hell to gain her point."

"And the clergyman?"

"Gone to help her, of course."

"I think you're right, Mr. Martin," said Hugh, slowly. "To-morrow I'll tell you something about myself that will explain her anxiety to claim my name—something I've kept to myself ever since I came to America. She may not care to be my wife when I'm a plain American citizen."

"I don't quite catch your drift, my son."

"Wait!" said Hugh. "I think I see light at last."

CHAPTER XVII

THE judge was late in coming, and they sat in a corner of the bare court room while the lawyer arranged preliminaries with the clerk. A dusty beam of sunlight came through the unwashed window between heavy crimson curtains and made a glory on the dirty wall. The rows of vacant chairs and the threadbare carpet on the floor gave a cheerless aspect to the place, although a fresh nosegay in a glass of water beside the well-worn Bible on the bench of judgment lent a welcome note of color.

Now and then the clerk peered over the lawyer's shoulder at the slim, brown-eyed girl in a soft-trailing mist of pale violet, who looked so happily up from under the drooping brim of her dainty hat at the spectacled patriarch and the tall, sun-tanned young man on either side of her—a vision of youthful grace and beauty unwonted in that dreary atmosphere.

“Helen, I’ve a confession to make,” said Hugh, “and I’m going to ask you” — turning to Mr. Martin — “to let me speak plainly.” The muscles about his mouth quivered. “I know I have no right to speak of the thing that lies closest to my heart — you understand — ” His voice choked.

“Yes, yes, my son,” muttered the father. “It’ll all come right — all in time.”

“And it is because I hope the day will soon come when I can let my heart speak for itself that I am about to engage in the most serious act of my life.”

Her head drooped down until the brim of her hat hid the rosy face.

“Hugh! — here? in such a place?” she protested faintly.

“It’s but a step from one nationality to another,” he continued, without answering her, “a few words, a whisk of the pen, and it’s all over. It may be easy for some men to take that step, but in my own case it is not merely the choosing of a new home, or the acceptance of a new political creed: it is the extinction of a title which twenty

generations of my blood have been proud to bear."

"A title, my son? Why, what does this mean?" asked Mr. Martin, in astonishment. Helen raised her head and looked wide-eyed at him.

"I came to your house under an assumed name — my dear mother's — but it is the name I intend to carry to my grave," he said, with a sigh. "I owe you an apology for the deception, even though it was my only means of carrying out an honorable plan forced upon me by unexpected poverty. It may have been a foolish idea, but it was an honest one."

"Needn't tell me that," said the old man.

"I am the Viscount Delaunay, heir to the Earl of Castlehurst, my grandfather. We are both poor. A series of misfortunes has swept away everything but our rank. Rather than live a life of shame and contract debts I could never pay to support a title earned by other men, I assumed my mother's name and came to New York to make my way by my own merits. It's a short story, devoid of romance and — well, you don't

know how glad I am to tell it and set myself straight in your eyes."

"Oh, Hugh," cried Helen, with a look of pride and love, "it's the most beautiful story I've ever heard, but" — the soft voice shook a little — "for your own sake think of what you are doing. The sacrifice is too great. It's your birthright — you may go back to England some day" — in spite of all the tears brimmed in her eyes as her imagination caught the shadow of disaster.

"Think it over, my boy," said Mr. Martin. "You're throwing away in a minute what you can't get back in a lifetime."

"But you said that —"

"Ah, yes," answered Helen, turning away from the search of his too candid eyes, "but how could I know that it meant so much to you?"

"Would it" — he hesitated and dropped his voice to a whisper — "would it make any difference to you if ever — you know I can't speak plainly, Helen" — she raised one little hand in appeal — "I know it's not the same with women; the social prestige of rank is so important sometimes. And if I thought that you —"

“There’s no reason why you shouldn’t speak, sis,” exclaimed Mr. Martin, observing his daughter’s deep agitation. “It’s a matter that may concern both of your lives, and — Well, I guess I’ll take a turn in the hallway for a minute or two; only” — his tone became hard and precise — “don’t forget — Well, hang it! you’re both grown up, and I’m getting to be an old fool.” Whereat he strode out of the court room, leaving them alone.

“Am I to call you ‘my lord’ or just ‘Hugh,’ as before,” she asked, looking up.

“That is for you to decide, Helen.”

“Oh, Hugh, Hugh, it’s your own life, your own future, I think of.”

“You said once that your husband could have no other title than American citizen.” His soul was in his face. “Do you say so now?”

“I never thought you could be so shameless as to resort to such a stratagem. It’s — it’s simply cowardly to take advantage of me.”

The wild rose color rioted in her face, and the white fingers twisted themselves into the

violet draperies. Even the peeping clerk had sense enough to turn his head away.

“Do you say so now?” he repeated.

She raised her head, and a look of ineffable sweetness came into her face.

“Yes, Hugh,” she said.

“Amen!” he answered soberly.

“But, oh! I wish I knew what this trouble is that hangs over you,” she whispered, “this nameless thing that makes you talk in riddles to me, this mystery that has darkened —”

“It’s all very simple, Helen. There’s nothing you shouldn’t know, and I’ll tell you now.”

“There’s the judge at last,” said Mr. Martin, hurrying in; “and the clerk’s beckoning to you.”

They advanced to the wooden railing together, and after a few questions and answers, the clerk set the Bible forth for the oath.

“I prefer the open Bible,” said Hugh. — “It’s a good old custom.”

Running the pages rapidly through his fingers, he opened the ragged volume at the Book of Ruth and set his hand upon one side of the

page. In a firm, clear voice he repeated the oath of renunciation and allegiance. His face was pale, but his eyes shone with a new tenderness and pride.

“I have taken two oaths to-day,” he whispered to Helen, “one on earth and the other in heaven. You have heard one, and I want you to see the other.”

He pointed to the spot on which his hand had rested, and she read the promise of Ruth : —

“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.”

The little head sank lower and lower, until the drooping hat-brim almost hid the sacred page and the red lips touched the words.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHILE the heir of the house of Castlehurst was vowing allegiance on the altar of democracy, William Remington sat in the deep silence of his well-guarded office reading a cablegram which a noiseless attendant had just placed on his desk:—

“LONDON.

“WILLIAM REMINGTON, New York:—

“Earl of Castlehurst just died. His heir, Viscount Delaunay, is living in New York under name Hugh Dorsay. Have cabled him, but get no answer. Please put him in communication with me.

“CHADDER, *Solicitor*.”

The banker's hard visage softened as he read and re-read the message. He whistled softly, an event so unusual that the door was gently opened by a clerk, who closed it again when he saw his employer's cheerful countenance.

Experience of the social limitations of wealth, and a reluctant recognition of the fashionable triumphs attending the marriage of American daughters of wealth to titled aliens, had modified the cynical views of Mr. Remington's earlier years. After all, a rich American husband could bring nothing to his daughter but money, and of that she would have no need. It could not be denied that hereditary rank was a substantial thing from many standpoints; it would survive the loss of wealth. An ancient title might accomplish for a woman in a year what money could not compass in a lifetime. The banker's pride in his beautiful daughter, and his ambition for her social success, powerfully inclined him to the arguments of his scheming spouse; and while he pretended to sneer at her ravening passion for coronets and castles, the delightful poison was already at work in his own stolid mind. His recent business operations in the British metropolis had brought him in contact with more than one peer, and he observed with surprise and conviction the deference shown by even the most powerful

and hard-headed English financiers to noble-men of moderate means and slight abilities.

There was no adumbration of sentiment in Mr. Remington's slow conversion to his wife's social ideas. His imagination was limited to the utilitarian aspects of life, and he weighed men and things according to their practical values. If a title would open to his daughter worldly distinctions and opportunities otherwise inaccessible, then a title was worth having.

The intense struggle for wealth and commercial power had left the banker without moral or mental resources other than those necessary for his vast money-making schemes. He bought pictures and tapestries, and maintained a steam yacht, a country house, and a box at the opera, because they ministered to the pleasure of his wife and daughter. Music and painting bored him, the sea made him ill, and life in the country meant an intolerable exile from the scene of his real interests. His sedentary habits deprived him of the physical vigor and resilience indispensable to the enjoyment of athletic sports, and his deliberate tempera-

ment shrank from the speculative follies of horse racing. He knew little of politics and less of literature. In short, his moral boundaries were parochial and devoid of beauty. Midas-like, he learned the secret of turning everything into gold, but starved his nature.

The sudden discovery of Hugh's real rank stirred the millionaire's sluggish imagination. With an English earl for a son-in-law he might open doors as yet sealed against him. Such an alliance could be made a powerful weapon in the industrial invasion of England.

He crumpled the cablegram in his hand, smoothed it out again, and pondered the words. No, there could be no mistake. The circumstances of Hugh's arrival in New York, his letter of introduction from Professor Muhlenberg, his reticence about his family, his aristocratic face and figure, and his obviously gentle breeding, all corroborated Mr. Chadder's message. The Earl of Castlehurst! Mr. Remington allowed his squat body to snuggle back in the leather chair. He rubbed his hands and laughed softly to himself.

Within the hour he returned to his house and broke the astounding news to the partner of his bosom, who, in turn, whispered it in the ear of her daughter, whereat the blushing heiress threw herself into her mother's arms, and kissed her rapturously, and burst into tears.

"We must have him to dinner to-night," said Mr. Remington, with a knowing look. "He should learn the news under the most propitious circumstances."

"But we're having a late afternoon party for Mrs. Grant's children — the house will be simply filled with the tots."

"It can't be helped, Fanny, we'll have to get our dinner guests by telephone and ask them to come early to see the little ones before they go. It would never do to let this opportunity slip."

"And he doesn't know he's an earl yet?"

"He'll know it for the first time to-night."

"Oh, you dear, dear old darling!" cried the excited girl, falling upon the astonished banker and kissing him in an ecstasy of joy.

"I'm glad Jack's away," said Mr. Remington, thoughtfully. "He'd spoil everything."

"And to think we never suspected!" cried the heiress. "Just think! One of the oldest titles in England! I wonder why he never told us."

"Oh, some boyish prank, you may be sure. Now that I remember it, he did say something to me once about his ambition to make a place in the world for himself."

"A very proper sentiment, I'm sure," observed Mrs. Remington, with oracular solemnity.

"And we never dreamed! Oh, papa! I'm simply crazy about it."

"I telephoned to Bradshaw's," said Mr. Remington, dryly, "and they say the old earl hadn't a dollar—property mortgaged up to the limit. But, *nous allong chawnjay toosy la*—I never could manage French, my dear, but it's all right; we'll change it, just the same."

"The hand of God is in it," remarked Mrs. Remington, turning her hawk eyes toward the ceiling.

"Um," answered the old man, grimly.

"I always felt that he was different from other young men."

"Um."

"So courtly, so distinguished, so noble in his mind and person."

"It isn't necessary, my dear," said the banker. "He's not here now, and you might save it for this evening."

"How can you be so coarse at a moment like this?" exclaimed the matron, loftily.

"Bah!" he retorted, with a gesture of impatience, "what's the use of hypocrisy? He's a good-looking, well-mannered fellow, no better and no worse than a thousand young men I could pick up here in a day's walk — but he's an earl, and that makes all the difference. Don't talk nonsense. You wouldn't think of him for a son-in-law if he were an American."

"Why, papa, you talk as if I were being sold on the auction block," cried Miss Remington, indignantly.

"Well, well, Fanny," he said, with a rough show of tenderness, as he regarded the beautiful face, "I used to have other ideas about your future, but — Oh, well, it's best after all as it is, perhaps, and I suppose we ought to act as if it were a love match. It comes to the same

thing in the end, my girl; the heart interest doesn't last forever."

"But aren't you taking a good deal for granted? Mr. Dorsay —"

"Lord Castlehurst."

"Lord Castlehurst has never spoken to me about —"

"Never fear, Fanny, we've enough to gild a hundred coronets and to spare. He hasn't been enjoying the society of the handsomest heiress in America for nothing. It's all a matter of hard cash."

"Would you corrupt your own child?" groaned Mrs. Remington, rolling her eyes upward.

"Confound it!" roared the old man, wrathfully, "what do you expect me to say?"

"I expect you, Mr. Remington, to act like a father," said the matron, indefinitely.

"I'll do my part when the time comes," he growled. "Now you do yours. See that the dinner is something unusual; ask Delmonico's for suggestions."

"We might invite the Bradfords and the Gaylors," suggested Miss Remington.

"Just the people."

"And the Van Pelts."

"That would never do. Old Van Pelt's chairman of the South African Emancipation Committee."

"Judge O'Connor."

"Nonsense; he's a sort of a Fenian. Better get the De Lanceys and the Stevensons—they're prominent in the Anglo-American League. Then there's young Hodley,—a frightful ass, but a cousin of Lady Pendleton—we might invite him."

"We can ask some of the grown-ups to stay when the children's party breaks up," added Mrs. Remington.

After that the great house was a scene of excitement and confusion as the preparations for the dinner were pressed. The invitations were given by telephone, with alluring hints of a remarkable event which was to take place, and acceptances were demanded as a matter of honor. The young heiress herself talked to Hugh over the wire, and persuaded him to come, in spite of his engagements at the office,

by promising to tell him a surprising piece of news that would affect his whole life. Thinking that some clew to the hiding-place of Miss Grush had been discovered, he agreed to come early and stay to the dinner.

Mother and daughter racked their brains for original ideas. British flags surrounded by American beauty roses were ordered, English pheasants, ices moulded in the form of coronets—a conception of Delmonico's chef—bon-bon boxes adorned with the Queen's portrait, and even a figure of Britannia, in Chelsea porcelain, which the delighted girl found in a fashionable antique shop.

It meant hard work and much ingenuity to arrange a worthy feast in such a short space of time, but womanly wit and the resources of wealth bridged every difficulty, and long before the guests arrived, the great Flemish-oak dining room had been transformed into a scene of beauty, with blossoming branches depending from the dark, cool ceiling; roses mingling with trailing vines on the walls, fairy garlands twining about the carved pillars, and costly vases

running over with floral loveliness. Here and there in the dazzle of silver and glass on the snowy table were little British flags, and in the centre stood the image of Britannia, set on a wonderful base of white jade, with the heraldic crest of the Castlehursts — copied from Debrett's Peerage — outlined against it in tiny flowers.

Hugh arrived just as the lights were being lit and the children were swirling through the vast drawing-room in a romping dance, their shrill voices ringing high above the merry lilt and thrum of the music. Mrs. Remington's greeting amazed him. The green eyes were almost affectionate. She held his hand when he would have withdrawn it, and smiled upon him with motherly intimacy. Miss Remington received him with shy glances, a blushing air of self-consciousness, and pretty accusations of neglect murmured in his bewildered ear. Why had he remained away so long? It was fully two days since anybody had had a sight of him. Had he no thought of the feelings of others? He could scarcely believe his senses as he

entered the resplendent drawing-room, with the stately girl beside him, when Mr. Remington rushed forward with outstretched hands and a glad cry of welcome.

The sudden change from friendly condescension to deference and flattery mystified Hugh. He was the centre of attention. His lightest word was listened to with marked respect, his smile was the signal for answering smiles. Hitherto he had been treated as a welcome but negligible factor in the social functions of the house; now he was the hero and favorite. He was introduced to the other guests ceremoniously. Even the children were requested to shake hands with him, and as they trooped about his tall figure in the middle of the room he was surprised to find the banker looking at him with an unmistakable air of pride and satisfaction. But he was not to be long in doubt as to the meaning of it all.

The children were presently gathered in the rear part of the room for a new game, while the adults stood in a group in the front to watch the dainty scene. The little ones formed a ring

and noisily debated the advisability of "Ring-a-ring-a-rosy" or "London Bridge."

Mr. Remington drew a paper from his pocket, cleared his throat with a portentous cough, and turned to his guests.

"My friends," he began, in a voice that silenced the childish babble, "you are all aware that for a long time my house has been honored by the frequent presence of a young man whose high character and noble qualities have endeared him to us."

The old man paused and looked benevolently at Hugh, who was overwhelmed with embarrassment to find himself the target for all eyes.

"I need not say," continued the banker, sweeping the eager company with his glance, "that my feelings toward him have been those of a father rather than a friend."

Hugh's face was a study. Mrs. Remington sighed and wiped her eyes. The queenly Fanny looked at her mother, and having a sense of humor, was inclined to laugh.

"This dear friend came to us in the modest character of a private gentleman, wisely preferring to seek his associations among those who, how-

ever they may esteem rank and title, know how to appreciate and honor unassuming worth."

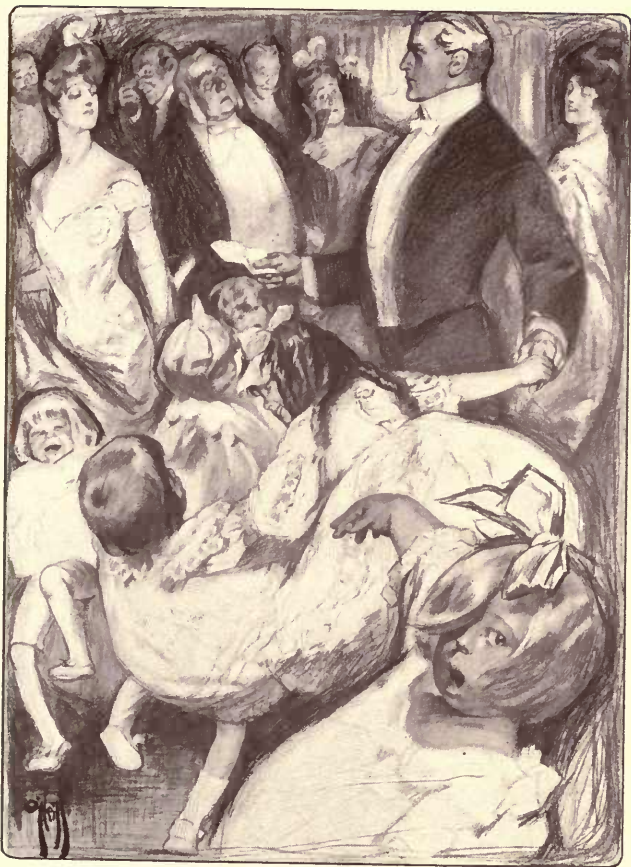
The ring of children began to revolve, and as the dancers tripped around, a sweet chant in piping treble filled the room:—

"London Bridge is burning down,
Burning down, burning down,
London Bridge is burning down,
My fair lady."

"It is my privilege," said the old man, holding up the crumpled paper and raising his voice to make himself heard,— "it is my privilege to announce that the Viscount Delaunay, whom we have known as Mr. Dorsay, has, by the death of his distinguished grandfather, become the Earl of Castlehurst. My lord," — turning to Hugh, whose face paled, — "here is the cablegram."

With a childish halloo the dancers came sweeping across the carpet, and surrounding Miss Remington, whirled about her, singing their gay chorus:—

"What'll we do to build it up,
Build it up, build it up?
What'll we do to build it up,
My fair lady?"



“‘LONDON BRIDGE IS BURNING DOWN.’”

"'Sssh!" commanded Mrs. Remington, shaking her finger at the circle of laughing, rosy faces, as Hugh seized the paper and read the message. The children ceased from singing and silently caught hands about him, rising on tiptoe in their eagerness to resume the romp. He drew himself to his full height and turned upon the hushed group a countenance full of perplexity.

"I'm really sorry, Mr. Remington, that it should have been considered necessary to announce the death of my grandfather in this formal manner," he said in a quiet voice. "It is, of course, a shock to me, although our relations were unfortunately strained. But you have made a mistake—I'm not the Earl of Castlehurst."

"Not the earl!" exclaimed Mrs. Remington, with a gasp.

"What?" cried the banker, purpling with indignation.

"No, indeed, I'm a good American citizen. I was naturalized this morning. That extinguished the title."

Had a thunderbolt descended through the

painted ceiling it could not have caused more consternation than Hugh's simple announcement. A moment before Miss Remington had faced him with a smile of admiration, which changed to a haggard stare. Her mother started, with a sigh of horror. Young Mr. Hodley was ill-mannered enough to snigger, and his "Oh, Lord!" sent the hot blood rushing to the banker's temples.

"Why, what jest is this?" said the old man, with a look of rage.

Hugh surveyed his angry host with an expression of wondering surprise. His steady blue eyes met the furious glare without flinching. The encircling children were tugging at his coat, their little feet tapping the floor in frolic fever and their pretty faces protesting saucily against the interruption of their sport.

"It's no jest, sir," he said, "and I'm at a loss to understand why you should consider it so. Of course it's very embarrassing to me to explain matters in this semi-public way, but your attitude compels me to speak plainly."

"Oh, Lord!" repeated young Mr. Hodley, in an audible whisper. Mrs. Remington seized her

daughter's hands and drew her away. The banker eyed the expatriated peer in stern silence.

"Mr. Remington," continued Hugh, calmly, "when you first saw me in Westminster Abbey I was looking for the last time on the banner of my house. The dust you saw on that banner wasn't got by trailing on the ground. It was dust of the sloth that brought poverty — yes, poverty, but honest poverty — to my family. Rather than live a life of sham and wear a title that I could not support with dignity, I chose to come to a country in which all men are equals. I owe all I have and all I am to that country, and God being my judge, I'll bear true allegiance to it."

As he ceased, the dancers swung around him, and the childish song swelled out triumphantly: —

"Build it up with brick and stone,
Brick and stone, brick and stone,
Build it up with brick and stone,
My fair lady."

"For God's sake, take them away," roared Mr. Remington, and as the pouting roisterers were led out of the room, he turned to Hugh

sourly. "There is no necessity for further explanation," he said. "The fact of your citizenship is sufficient."

"He's only an American, after all," observed Mr. De Lancey, in an undertone of disgust.

"Isn't that enough?" asked Hugh, whose keen ear caught the remark.

"Oh, quite, quite, I'm sure," said Mr. De Lancey, reddening at the thrust.

"I'm simply de-light-ed!" exclaimed Mrs. Bradford, darting a malicious glance at her tragic hostess. "Let me congratulate you, Mr. Dorsay. It's so romantic."

"Hello, Hugh," cried Captain Remington, bursting into the room with outstretched hand. "Just got back from Washington in time to hear the news. Threw away an earldom to become an American citizen! By George, I envy the country that can breed men like you. Isn't it magnificent, father?"

"Very!" said the old man.

"There's romance and chivalry for you, Fanny," added the impetuous officer. "There's the real thing."

"Charming!" lisped Mrs. Stevenson.

"Oh! I do congratulate you, Mr. Dorsay," said Miss Remington, impulsively offering her hand. "I think you are a good, brave gentleman."

"As congratulations seem to be in order, I suppose we should all welcome Mr. Dorsay to his — er — to his new station in life," observed Mr. Remington, coldly. "The thing's done, and, after all, it's a matter of taste. There are worse things than American citizenship."

As the guests recovered from the shock of the incident and a confused babble of whispers succeeded polite silence, Hugh approached Mrs. Remington.

"I trust you will excuse me from remaining to dinner," he said. "The news of my grandfather's death —"

"We shall miss you so much," she murmured, her green eyes glowing with malevolence.

And so the dinner was eaten without Hugh's presence.

"Never saw such a ghastly affair," said young Mr. Hodley, the next day. "It was positively

tragic. The Remingtons hadn't a word to say, not even when that low ruffian, Jack Remington, made coarse jokes about the British flags and the statue of Britannia. But when the iced coronets were served, — oh, Lord! And the deuce is that nobody can understand why What's-his-name was such an ass as to do it."

CHAPTER XIX

"CAN you remember anything about her, Mr. Irkins?" asked Mr. Martin, leaning on the arm of the sick man's chair, and watching the feverish eyes that glittered under the gaunt brow.

"Nothing," said the invalid, wearily. "Ever since that blow here"—he raised a wasted hand and touched the great scar on his head—"my mind has been blank as to a good many subjects."

"It's so important," urged the veteran, anxiously. "I'm absolutely certain that this mysterious Countess of Castlehurst mentioned in the cable news is the woman who tricked Dorsey into the sham marriage. If you'd only think hard, Mr. Irkins; the slightest clew might save him."

"Her assault on me was a felony, yet it would be hard to prove an intent to kill. The English are so strict about their extradition laws."

He leaned his head back among the cushions and stared at the ceiling, as if he were searching for the secret of memory there.

"I can't remember; and my head is throbbing again," he complained, drawing his hand across his shrivelled face, and letting it fall weakly on his breast. "Her name gives me a curiously painful sense of horror—like the sight of a snake—and yet I can't recall her. What was she like, Martin?"

"Tall, thin, black hair, black eyes, bony features—something like an Arab or Indian—soft voice—"

"No, its useless—useless."

"My God! what a situation!" groaned Mr. Martin, with a gesture of despair. "Think of what it means to Dorsay!"

"Ah, Dorsay, Dorsay," echoed Mr. Irkins, with a smile. "Like my own son, Martin. And he gave up an earldom without a regret?"

"Never moved an eyelash, sir. It was a beautiful sight. Even the judge left the bench to shake his hand. 'The seeds of death can-

not germinate in this nation, Mr. Dorsay,' he said, 'so long as it can draw men like you.'"

"'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid,'" muttered Mr. Irkins.

"Ay."

"He'll be my heir, Martin; I've no children. He'll be your employer some day. It won't be a bad thing to have a son-in-law —"

"Don't, don't," pleaded the old man. "It's like thrusting a knife in my heart. My girl — you've never seen her — and this thing, I dare not tell her."

"If you only had a photograph of Miss Grush it might awaken —"

"Great heavens! why didn't I think of it before?" Mr. Martin thrust his hand in his pocket. "Here, here she is, damn her!" — handing the faded portrait to the invalid — "and there's not her like this side of hell."

A ghastly change came over the sunken face of the sick editor, as he looked at the smiling, treacherous countenance of the adventuress. His bluish lip hung loosely, and his great

eyes seemed to blaze from their dark caverns; his white, hollowed features twitched. The scar on his head was a vivid line of crimson.

"Bar — Barb — Barbara —" he stammered excitedly.

"That's it, Mr. Irkins — Barbara Grush."

"Barbara Baird."

"Grush! Grush!"

"Barbara Baird," repeated the invalid, trembling violently. "She — she ruined my younger brother. Her husband — John Baird — forger, convict — in Joliet prison. A-a-ah!" he screamed, "I remember now. I was going to tell Dorsay, and she struck me down and — what? eh? — what am I talking about, Martin?" His eyes dulled and wandered. "This photograph, eh? — No, I can't remember anything about her." A strained, vacant look revealed the sudden extinction of memory.

It was a mere flash of the crippled brain, but it lit up the dark mystery.

Not even the oldest member of the *Mail* staff had ever seen Mr. Martin in such a state of

hilarious excitement. He joked and laughed and moved through the office with the springy step of youth. But he was busy — no man had ever seen him busier. He wrote long telegrams, drove the telephone operators to distraction, and searched old newspaper files. As he went about, he hummed and whistled, explaining his industry to no man.

His message to the warden of the Joliet prison was answered promptly. John Baird, convicted of forgery in Chicago and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, had served his term and was discharged. He was a married man; wife's name, Barbara; address unknown. His second message elicited the information that the convict's abiding-place was known only to the chief of police of Chicago. A telegram to that official referred the inquirer to a New York lawyer. Mr. Martin telephoned to the lawyer, who explained that John Baird, after vainly searching for his wife, had gone to London in the hope of finding work. He could be found at The Gray Dog, a lodging-house in Whitechapel Road. His long confinement and the

cruel circumstances in which his wife — for whose sake he had committed forgery — abandoned him had weakened his mind, and he was subject to violent fits of anger.

When Hugh reached the office, after leaving the Remingtons and their guests in consternation, he found Mr. Martin in a state of joy verging on delirium. His hand was seized and shaken until it ached. Then he was embraced, pounded on the shoulder, and poked in the ribs. The old man's laugh was uproarious and contagious; Hugh found himself laughing, too, without knowing why.

"We've got the hell-cat cornered at last," cried Mr. Martin, "and we'll singe the hair off her."

"You don't really mean —"

"I do, I do, my son!"

"Miss Grush?"

"Got her dead as Cæsar."

"You've discovered —"

"That she's Mrs. John Baird."

"What?"

"The wife of an ex-convict, who is still living."

"Then I'm" — Hugh looked bewildered —
"I'm not —"

"You're the finest young bachelor in New York, my boy."

"God! What an escape! How did you find it out?"

"I'll tell you that when I've finished a little matter I've been working on. Meanwhile I'd like your opinion of this as a neat and suitable message to your solicitor." And he handed a cablegram to Hugh, who read it:—

"CHADDER, London:

"Woman claiming to be Countess Castlehurst is fugitive from justice; wanted in New York for felonious assault. She is wife of John Baird, discharged convict, at present living Gray Dog lodging-house, Whitechapel Road, London. You can simplify matters by sending her address to her husband.

"HUGH DORSAY."

"It beats hell how things do work out," said Mr. Martin. "My! oh, my! I'd give a thousand dollars to be there when they meet."

CHAPTER XX

THE clouds hung low over London, and a damp wind whipped through Jermyn Street, tossing the black crape on the door of the late Lord Castlehurst's lodgings and creaking the sign-boards on their rusty hinges,—a bleak, dolorous day, rawly suggestive of rain, with no hint of summer green in the prevailing gray, in which the ruddy light of firesides, seen through shut windows, intensified the outside dreariness.

“A man to see Lady Castlehurst; won't give 'is name, m' lady.” The meagre little butler stood blinking expectantly before his mistress, who continued to write at her desk for a moment and then turned in her chair with a yawn of indifference.

“A man, did you say?”

“Yes, m' lady.”

“Something about the earl's funeral?”

“I think not, m' lady. The undertaker's man

is downstairs now arrangin' for his lordship's 'atchment to be put over the door."

"What does he want, Thompson?"

"Don't know, m' lady; 'e says it's very partic'ler private. I think" — the butler hesitated — "e's an American; talks like one."

"Why, it must be Mr. Frewen, the clergyman who came with me the other day —"

"Not 'im, m' lady. This one's tall."

"And an American?"

"I think so."

"Well, don't stand chattering there." She threw the pen from her impatiently. "Show the person in. And Thompson —"

"Yes, m' lady."

"If Mr. Chadder calls, tell him that the Countess of Castlehurst can't be seen and that the family affairs — you won't forget, Thompson? —"

"No, m' lady."

"— that the family affairs are in the hands of her solicitor."

The butler withdrew, with a melancholy air and downcast eyes. There was an interval of

silence. Then footsteps were heard on the staircase. As the sound reached her ear she started and listened intently. A timid knock preceded the opening of the door, and the stranger entered.

He was a tall, angular, loose-built man, whose clothes hung awkwardly on his powerful frame. His emaciated countenance, half-hid by an unkempt black beard, had a wolfish sharpness. The deep-set, sullen eyes gave him a singular expression of repressed ferocity. His arms were long and the hands white and fine.

"You wished to see me?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered in a hoarse voice.

"Well, what can I do for you?" He was staring at her fiercely, and she tapped the carpet with her foot nervously. "Come, what is it?"

He folded his arms across his breast and continued to stare. His eyes were bloodshot. The hairs of his beard bristled visibly with the muscular play of his jaws.

"You don't know me?" The voice seemed to come from a cave.

"Know you? Why, of course I don't."

She glanced up sharply, with a look of annoy-

ance, not unmixed with fear, at the uncouth, sinister figure.

“Do I remind you of any one you knew — years and years ago?”

She had turned her face away, but her head turned slowly back and her black eyes crept sidewise at him.

“Barbara Baird!”

With a little scream she leaped to her feet and met his eyes.

“Jack!” she gasped, with a shudder. “How did you find me? I thought you were dead. I thought —” The words died away, leaving her lips dry and blue.

“Never mind how I found you,” he said savagely, with a quick step forward that drew a suppressed sound of terror from her. “I’m here and that’s enough. You don’t seem very glad to see me.”

“But you don’t” — she stammered — “you don’t understand —”

“Don’t I, though?” he growled, with an oath.

“How could I know you were alive, Jack?”

They told me you were dying, when I went to Asia because I was alone and poor and had to seek work as a nurse."

"Liar and traitor!" he answered in a paroxysm of fury. "You used your devilish powers of mesmerism to make me commit the crime that sent me to a living death, and after I had lost my name and my soul to pamper your vanity, you abandoned me to my fate like a dog. From that day on I consecrated my life to hate, and the thought of your punishment gave me strength to bear my sufferings. When I left the prison, I searched America for you; no bloodhound ever followed a trail more keenly. I starved myself to save money for the chase. Sometimes I would dream that I had my fingers around your throat and wake up to find myself cheated."

He grinned hideously and showed his teeth, his white, sinewy hands working convulsively. There was a maniacal glitter in his eyes.

"Oh, Jack! Jack! for Christ's sake spare me!" she begged, with clasped hands and drooping figure. "I've a great title and can help you

now. You don't know how I've worked and what I've dared to win it. No, no, Jack, don't look at me that way—you terrify me." Her voice sank to a drowsy sweetness, and her lean form swayed to and fro, sinuously graceful. "You used to love me, Jack. You promised to cherish and protect me, dear. See! see! your wife, Jack,"—she reached her hands out,—“your little Barbara.”

“You treacherous beast!” he cried, “what mercy have you shown to me?”

She straightened up with a desperate effort to hide her fright.

“What are you going to do?” she asked.

He moved nearer. She retreated step by step, watching his terrible eyes and corpselike face.

“Do?” The great jaws snapped and the nostrils spread wide. “Do?” His breath came hard and short. “I'm going to take you to hell with me.”

With a leap he was upon her. Her scream for help ended in a gurgle, as the strong fingers closed around her lean throat. He bent her head slowly backward, snarling and growling like

a wild animal as he heard the bones of her neck crack. And when her struggles ceased and her eyes were stark, he picked the lifeless body up and hurled it under the table.

There was a rush of feet on the stairs and a clamorous group, headed by a constable, burst into the room. The murderer greeted them with a roar of laughter.

CHAPTER XXI

WHERE the sun shone brightest on the veranda of the little red-roofed cottage among the trees, Mr. Martin lay asleep in his easy-chair, his goodly white head nodding dreamlessly and his overturned pipe scattering its ashes along the broad railing. The smell of roses and the song of birds were in the peaceful air. Helen Martin, bending among the flowers, raised her head and smiled at the sight of the drowsy patriarch.

It was a pleasant sight, this quaint house, framed in green branches, with its prim, many-colored garden and fragrant shrubs. The rustling of the morning air among the leaves, the droning of the bees, and the clucking of the fat hen in the hedge were sounds in harmony with the tranquil contentment of the place. Even the open door, running over with roses, seemed to say that all within was rest and quiet.

The young mistress of the cottage was fair to look upon. Her brown eyes sparkled, and the bloom of health was in her cheeks. The slim, girlish lines of her figure had ripened into the dignity of womanly beauty, yet she moved with the lightness and grace of a child. Her hat lay on the grass beside her, and the breeze blew her soft brown hair about her dainty head. One white arm, bare to the elbow, held the gathered roses in crushed confusion against her breast.

Presently the little gate of the garden creaked, and a tall young man came bounding along the gravel path, halting, hat in hand, before her. The vigor of youth was in the spring of his step and the glow of his tanned face.

"Oh, is it you, Hugh?" she said, stooping over a rose-bush with a maidenly effort to seem indifferent that made him smile.

"How beautiful you are, Helen!"

"You've left the gate open again, sir."

"What of it, dear? Let us open the gates of all the gardens in the world to-day and leave them open for ever and ever."

"Which means in sensible language—?"

“That I want you to come with me for a stroll in the woods. I’ve something to say to you, Helen, and he” — pointing to the sleeping guardian on the veranda — “might wake up, which is not desirable.”

“Now, why do you always interrupt me when I’m busy?” she demanded, with an adorable frown that would not have deceived a child.

“Yes, I know it’s unpleasant. I hate to be interrupted myself, and” — with another glance toward the unconscious figure on the veranda — “that’s why I thought —”

“Hugh, you’re standing on my hat!”

“— why I thought of the woods.”

“It’s simply ruined.”

“So it is,” he admitted, holding the trampled hat up and surveying it calmly. “It shows how the slightest misstep in a man’s life —”

“Do you suppose it would do to go as I am, bareheaded?”

“— may turn his feet from heaven — for a while.”

Mr. Martin coughed and stirred in his chair.

“If you really want me to go, Hugh —”

"Of course it's annoying to be disturbed when one is so busy —"

The sleeper sneezed loudly, and the lovers fled laughing through the gate into the shady path that led under the murmuring boughs.

"How good these trees are," said Hugh, as they stood in the pleasant shadow of a clump of oaks. "How strong and sure of life they seem. They were here before we were born, and they'll be here when we're gone. Oh, Helen!" — his voice brought the wild rose tints to her cheek — "with such a short time to live, can we afford to jest and play with the best impulses God puts in our hearts? Can we sit here before these silent witnesses of human brevity and forget the lesson they teach?"

A gray squirrel whisked up a rough trunk, leaped out on the low-hanging branch, and stood watching them with bold, bright eyes and swaying tail. The hollow rat-tat-tat of a woodpecker echoed through the dim woods.

"I think" — the words trembled on her lips — "I think we had better return to the house, Hugh."

“Sweetheart!”

He gathered her in his strong arms and kissed her passionately.

“Oh, little one! it has been so long, so very long.”

She lay in his embrace, still and white, her head resting against his breast and her lips half parted.

“Do you forget the past, Hugh?”

“No, dear.”

“And have you no regrets? Ah! some day you may remember with bitterness what you have given up.” She sprang from his embrace in a passion of fear. “Some day you will want to go back to England, and everything will remind you of your old days, of the rank you have abandoned.”

“Yes, dear; and everything will remind me of what I have won. Oh, Helen! Helen! can’t you understand? I’ve left all the sham and pretence behind.”

“You gave up your name — for me?”

“And you hesitate — ”

“I?”

“—to give up your name?”

With a little cry, she threw her arms about him.

“No, no, Hugh,” she murmured. “Take me and keep me.”

They sat at the foot of the great oak, and he drew a ring from his finger. It was the talisman of Tancred.

“Mr. Chadder brought it to me from London,” he said. “A great knight gave it to one of my forefathers at Jerusalem. It has been worn by the just and the unjust, by the living and the dead.”

He took her hand in his.

“Which is the proper finger, Helen?”

“Not that, you goose,—the left hand.”

“And—?”

“The third finger.”

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